Cyrus Vance, Everybody's Man *Suetonius*

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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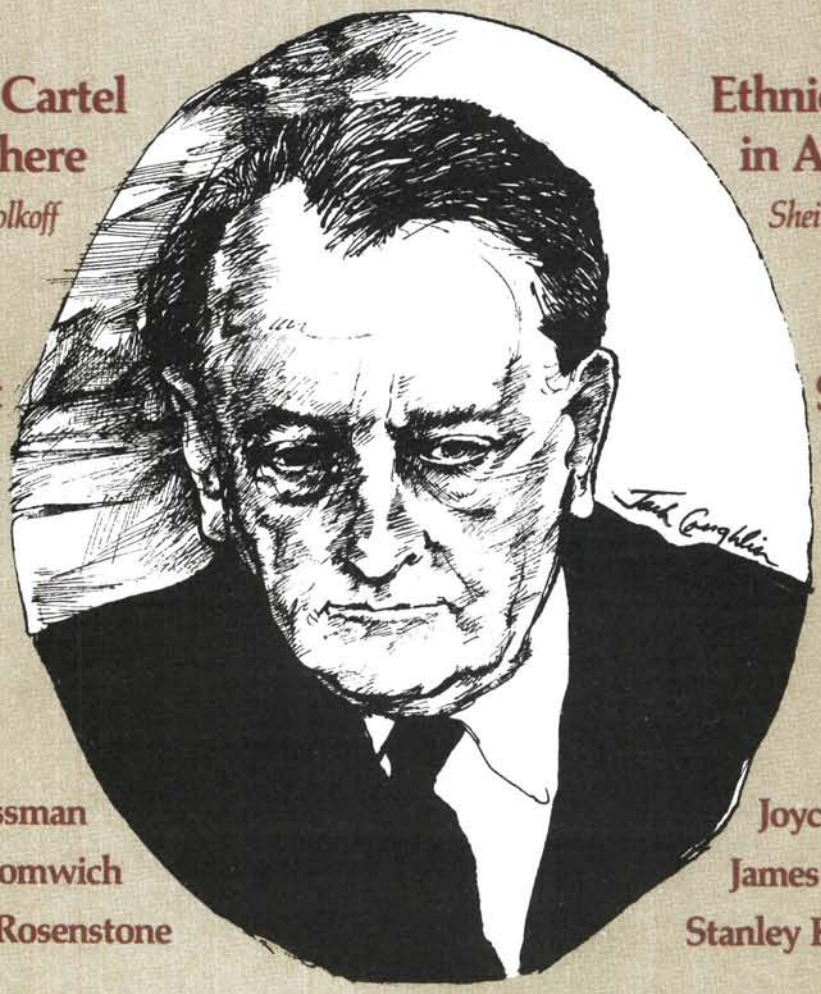

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TRB

from Washington ®
December 18, 1976

Stormclouds

Early Monday, April 17, 1961, some 1500 members of the Cuban Exile Brigade, organized, trained, armed, transported and directed from Guatemala by the CIA, achieved tactical surprise at the Bay of Pigs, fought ably and bravely, and were overcome when their ammunition was exhausted without air cover. Jack Kennedy first learned of the proposed operation at Palm Beach in the transition period. "All my life I've known better than to depend on experts!" he cried later.

On March 4, 1933, with heavy winter clouds hanging over Washington, FDR and Herbert Hoover rode almost silently to the Capitol. It was an earlier transition period. Repeatedly Hoover had tried to get his successor to accept responsibility for desperate plans to shore up the economy. FDR thought he would be trapped. When he told the nation that day with a fling of his head that there was nothing to fear "but fear itself" every bank in the country was closed.

George Norris in the lame duck (20th) amendment to the Constitution cut the dangerous transition interval about in half. It is still one of the most perilous periods in our rigid government. Since 1933 political control has changed hands four times in the White House: the nation is suspended between the past and the present with a caretaker government. Did Ike still intend "to go to Korea?" Truman asked in a blunt telegram in 1953. He sought Ike's "concurrence" in the critical question of the Korean prisoners.

In 1969 Nixon took over from LBJ with peace at stake and inflation beginning. Nixon arrived with his publicized "plan" to end the Vietnam war, which he never explained. After indicating they would go to the Paris peace talks, the South Vietnamese refused to participate: "That, I am convinced, cost Hubert Humphrey the presidency," LBJ wrote later in his reminiscences. He yielded to Richard Nixon and wrote in the same book (1971), "The American people, in their wisdom, have never yet elected an evil man to lead them."

When Lester Pearson defeated John Diefenbaker in Canada in 1963 there was no transition interval; the office of prime minister shifted in one day. That's the way it's done in Downing Street. Our system is a stage coach. Inaugural day now comes in January, not in March as it did in the crisis of 1933, but there's an anxious resemblance today to the nobody-in-charge situation under Hoover. There was roaring depression in 1933. One in four was out of work. The Senate Finance Committee summoned the top fiscal leaders of America in their double-breasted suits to help FDR (at Warm Springs instead of Plains, Georgia) decide what to do. Their appeal was to end spending, regain the confidence of business. Here is folk-hero Bernard Baruch speaking:

"Balance budgets. Stop spending money we haven't got. Sacrifice for frugality and revenue. Cut government spending—cut it as rations are cut in a seige. Tax—tax everybody for everything!" He wanted to put a starving economy on a diet.

A columnist in *The Wall Street Journal* wrote last week, "The way to get rid of inflation, and inflationary expectation, is to pursue responsible fiscal and monetary policies." As simple as that.

Things have changed in 44 years though; it is now agreed that a tax decrease is better than an increase in recession. The difficulty today is that many still don't realize the seriousness of the situation. Recovery wavers not just at home but abroad. There is the shadow of a global slump. At home, rise in output isn't fast enough to take care of the rise in unemployment. Wholesale prices advanced another six-tenths of one percent in November. Abroad they look to the United States for recovery—England, Italy, Mexico, wherever. There is an enormous build-up of international debt; the world is mortgaged. If the US regains prosperity it will return elsewhere; otherwise there is danger of national defaults, and desperate trade restrictions. Herbert Hoover signed the Smoot-Hawley tariff with the highest rates in history, and within two years 25 countries retaliated. About the time FDR took office Adolf Hitler, the new chancellor, watched 100,000 storm troopers goose-step down Unter den Linden.

Today the Carter transition is unique. Plains, Georgia, is taking over Washington. Never in my experience have I seen anything like it. Jody Powell, Charles Kirbo, Hamilton Jordan come up, sniff the scene, disappear. A government is changing hands. It is awe-inspiring and rather majestic. Hardboiled reporters here try to explain nuances. And the new administration? Something with wings is crawling out of the Carter chrysalis but what it will be nobody knows. Jerry Ford would like to help but hesitates. At this of all times, the steel industry insolently raises prices. Not a peep from President Ford. "White House Has Lockjaw on Steel Prices" banners *The Washington Star* irreverently. He is in charge; he should slap them down. He doesn't; this is transition time; all look to Carter.

The Pentagon gives tentative clearance to the controversial B-1 bomber, 244 of them will cost $22.9 billion. That and decisions on SALT talks, Middle East, China, the sick economy, they all wait.

I don't know what to make of the Carter operation so far. Everyone is sympathetic and the press has suspended criticism. This is the honeymoon period and the difficulties of transition speak for themselves. The Carter election campaign did not inspire too much confidence in skillful management. He started with strong advantages—a sick economy, Watergate, a divided opposition, a Reagan thrust that almost ousted Ford. In spite of this Carter barely managed to squeak through, with the main thrust somehow turning on his own personality rather than on the manifold weaknesses of his opponents.

Mr. Carter says he may or may not want standby wage-price controls; he may or may not favor a tax cut; he wants to aid the underprivileged but also wants to gain the confidence of business (and is making appointments to that ends). The Roosevelt transition, too, gave few signs of the New Deal through the 1933 fog. Then or now, few times have seemed to call so for boldness.

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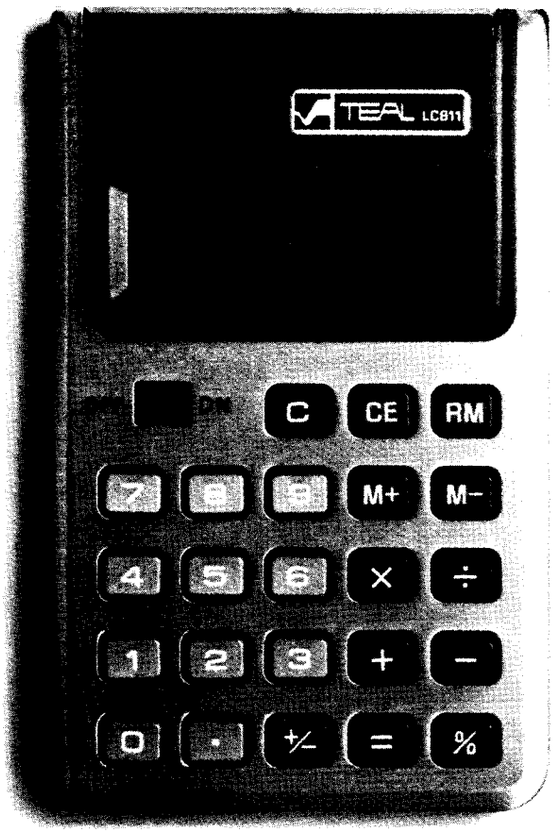

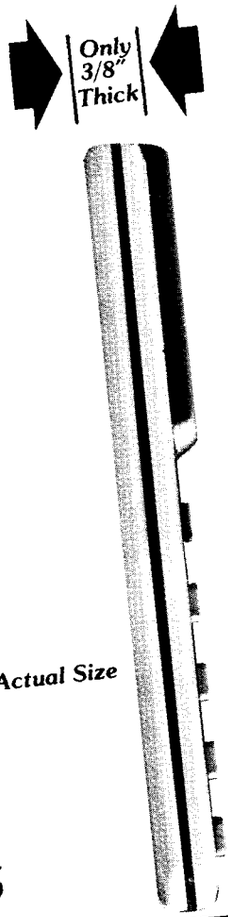

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The Government In Waiting

There is no established blueprint for the presidential transition, and not much that is learned in one transition is valuable in the next. Common customs have evolved to ease the transfer of power, but much depends on the relationship between the two men at the top. It can be difficult: two prominent public adversaries, each pressing a valid claim as the country's chief spokesman and military commander, one eager to begin work, the other merely serving time, entrusted only to pass the mantle of national leadership to his successor. Sometimes the strains show. They were perceptible when the President-elect volunteered his views on the rise in steel prices, for example. And Carter's people rightly took umbrage at Transportation Secretary Coleman's near-midnight decision not to require safety airbags in automobiles. As the old crowd leaves, it often gets in some last licks.

The talent search is the ritualistic and most publicized part of the transfer of power. But it's also necessary: when control passes from one party to another, the turnover in top-level personnel is inevitably greater, and it's better that a search be made than that all the appointments go through the crony network. How a President-elect fashions his government—the pace and the manner of choosing his subordinates—is very much his own prerogative. But the briefing books and dossiers being prepared by Mr. Carter's 200-plus transition staffers (the largest staging operation ever assembled at public expense by an incoming President) will do much to shape the character of the next four years. Writing 16 years ago, the last time a Democratic President took over from a Republican, this journal commented on John F. Kennedy's initial appointments: "For the first time in remembered history, the formation of an incoming administration resembles the formation of a new government under the parliamentary system of England and France; many of the incoming officials are already known to each other, most have some previous governmental experience."

JFK had been around the capital for 14 years before he became President and he was widely acquainted with his potential employees. He was at home in Washington, New York, Cambridge, Palm Beach. His father had friends in the party, and they became his own. Kennedy's Cabinet was in place within five weeks of the election—a

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pace considered deliberate in those days.

Jimmy Carter is proceeding more slowly, in part, because many of those now coming under his careful scrutiny are not known to him, to each other or to most of official Washington. Aside from the key foreign policy and defense positions, it's not likely that Carter's government will be made up of the ladies and gentlemen in waiting from previous Democratic administrations.

The highly public nature of transition politics can greatly aid a new President in broadening his support and extending his mandate. It may be especially important for one whose victory in the election was slim. By tradition, however, the Cabinet is a something-for-everyone proposition.

Here are some of the considerations Carter must weigh as he makes his choices. First are race and sex. Because at least one black is customarily named to the Cabinet, because Carter's electoral debt to his party's basic constituency is presumed to be sizable indeed, and because the Democrats have been out of office for eight years (and it is taken for granted that only under a Democratic administration can progress be made at this symbolic level), blacks and browns anticipate two Cabinet appointments. The same is true for women applicants.

Ethnicity is not a fading issue for Democrats: remember Carter campaigning in those ethnic enclaves? Since the election, the ethnic leaders have trod the path to Plains, like everyone else. Regional interests are still important: the West claims the Department of the Interior, and the Midwest still claims Agriculture. The bankers and corporate investors must be reassured. A Republican eminence in a Democratic administration, probably occupying the Treasury—the only building that sits symbolically between the White House and Congress—would calm the jitters of monetary conservatives. Religion is a resurgent consideration for an administration in which the two top jobs are already held by a lay Baptist preacher and the son of a Methodist minister. There will be at least one Roman Catholic in the Cabinet, and neither Vance nor Lance qualifies. Add all that up, and Carter's judicious approach to the business of staffing becomes understandable.

At the lower levels of the transition team, there is an interesting mix. Many on the ground floor of the talent search earned their places out of loyalty and service to the Carter candidacy in its early days. Others are latecomers. The "right-from-the-starters" are now in charge of broadening the scope of the Carter team, and many of them hope for appointments themselves. This is not an unusual arrangement in Washington, and not a very promising one either. But critics ought not to assume that early proximity to Carter discredits an appointee as an insider or crony. Carter's campaign included many talented and idealistic people who, given the opportunity to serve, will serve well.

Nevertheless, if this administration has an important hurdle to clear in the days ahead, it is the need to get beyond the simple test of political pedigree and to find men and women of distinction for the myriad subcabinet and agency appointments every incoming President must make. These are the people who generate ideas and implement programs. Many of the policy review positions are now staffed by individuals who can do both. They include an encouraging number of public interest activists, spawned in the late 1960s and early 1970s, who have practiced *pro-bono* law, managed corporation proxy fights and made reputations in organizing to preserve the environment and other causes. A few of them are in place largely or only because of their demonstrated loyalty to Carter, but many have been waiting for eight years or more for a chance to work in an administration more empathetic to the goals and commitments that shaped their own careers and crusades. Hedrick Smith wrote in *The New York Times* that there are few new faces among them. But that attitude makes a fetish of novelty. Many of the hopefuls have indeed been in Washington—but on the outside of power and in battle with it, and that makes them new enough for us.

Any government is a government of people, and despite some ominous tensions—the public outbreak of a power struggle between political adviser Hamilton Jordan and transition director Jack Watson, for example—this group is confident and energetic. It reminds us of what TRB wrote in these pages while watching the arrival of the Kennedy crowd in 1961, reflecting back on the opening days of FDR's administration. "The New Dealers who poured into Washington to take over government (in 1933)," he wrote, "were as gaudy a bunch of amateurs, intellectuals and crackpots as this experienced capital has ever seen." Roosevelt made that group strike sparks. Perhaps Jimmy Carter will do the same with his people.

Amnesty International

A British lawyer named Peter Benenson published an article 15 years ago in *The Observer* (London) entitled "The Forgotten Prisoner." It began: "Open your newspapers any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured, or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government. . .The newspaper reader feels a sickening feeling of impotence."

During the 1950s Benenson attended political trials in Hungary, Cyprus, South Africa and Spain, either as a legal observer or as a defense counsel. Just before he

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wrote the article he had read about two students in Portugal who were arrested in a restaurant and sent to prison for seven years for the "crime" of raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. Outraged, Benenson wanted to visit the Portuguese embassy in London to protest the arrests, but he quickly realized that an isolated, individual gesture would accomplish little.

Among his friends, Benenson discussed the idea of launching an international campaign to draw attention to the plight of prisoners detained for the peaceful expression of political or religious beliefs. Thus began a one-year campaign called "Appeal for Amnesty, 1961." To collect information about prisoners of conscience and publicize individual cases, an office in London was established and staffed by a handful of overworked volunteers. Within a few months the "Appeal for Amnesty, 1961" attracted wide support, and the groundwork was laid for a permanent organization that became known in 1962 as Amnesty International.

While AI has grown steadily over the past 15 years, the situation it was formed to combat has grown steadily as well. Reports of torture, execution and detentions without trial appear almost every day. Nearly a hundred thousand people are still in prison in Indonesia, most of them detained in 1965 during the military coup; few have been formally charged with a crime. Last year, the government of India, at the direction of Indira Gandhi, suspended fundamental civil rights and detained tens of thousands of citizens. This fall in Thailand, the new military regime rounded up thousands of people, including newspaper editors and others who have been accused—often by neighbors and acquaintances—of "subversive thinking."

Worse, many regimes have adopted the systematic use of torture in order to intimidate their citizens; AI has assembled harrowing stories from Chile, Uruguay and Iran. In Uruguay whole categories of prisoners are subjected to electric shock, asphyxiation, beatings and rape. From the Soviet Union, too, AI continues to collect information that confirms what has been known for a long time: that political prisoners are systematically starved in corrective-labor camps and that many political non-conformists end up in psychiatric institutions where doctors try to cure their "reformist delusions" with debilitating drugs.

Today, information about repression and imprisonment of prisoners of conscience is still collected in London at AI's International Secretariat where 40 full-time researchers monitor developments around the world. "Case sheets" are prepared, listing whatever information has been assembled about the prisoner and the circumstances of his arrest and detention. Anyone imprisoned for his or her ideas, race or religion is eligible for AI support so long as he or she has not used or advocated the use of violence. The case sheets are distributed to adoption groups around the world. Each group works on behalf of three prisoners of conscience from countries of differing political systems; no group works for prisoners in its own country. Letters, financial aid, and packages—when allowed—are sent to the prisoners and his family. Courteously worded letters of inquiry and concern are sent to prison and government officials. By writing each month, the adoption group demonstrates its support for the prisoner. Most governments prefer to act in secret, especially when political prisoners are involved. They believe they can arrest someone, stick him in a hole somewhere, and the world will never know. But AI often finds out, from families, from defense lawyers, even from letters smuggled out of prison. And the government, surprised that its own crimes have been exposed, often eases its treatment of a prisoner or releases him.

The growth of Amnesty International can best be gauged by the expansion of these adoption groups. Ten years ago there were 410 groups working in 19 countries. Today, there are 1665 groups at work in 30 countries, including over 500 in West Germany and more than 200 each in Sweden and Holland and some 150 in England. Recently, however, AI has begun to expand rapidly in the United States. Throughout the 1960s, as national sections grew in Western Europe, there seemed to be little interest here, presumably because American activists were preoccupied with the civil rights movement and the escalating US involvement in Vietnam. Furthermore, many people may have been confused by the organization's name: "amnesty" for most Americans refers to Vietnam war resisters and not to prisoners of conscience around the world.

Consequently, four years ago, there were only seven adoption groups in the United States and little, if any, visible activity. Now, however, there are 86 adoption groups, with major AI centers in New York, Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco; groups are also forming throughout the Midwest and South.

Joshua Rubenstein

Mr. Rubenstein writes on Soviet affairs.

Ethnics in Academe

When Pan Am launches a new ad on TV that talks about Americans who are Polish but have never seen Poland, African but don't know Africa, and Japanese but have never visited Japan, it is clear that Michael Novak's ideas about the rise of the "unmeltable ethnics" have become an accepted part of American thought.

Given this new openness about ethnicity, it may come as a surprise that universities and colleges remain locked into an attitude that emerged during the late 1960s. At that time, as a result of the drives for voter registration in the South and the black pride movement, many institutions of higher learning introduced courses in Afro-American studies. These courses were

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soon joined by similar ones in Chicano studies, Native-American studies, and Asian-American studies; and in many colleges all or some of these courses are now lumped together into departments of ethnic studies. This is the situation, for example, at Merritt Junior College, in Oakland, California—the alma mater of Huey Newton, whose brother Melvin Newton subsequently became chairman of Merritt's ethnic studies department and is currently in charge of the liberal arts division, which includes not only ethnic studies but also history and the sciences.

In April, 1974, not content merely to offer its students courses in ethnic studies, the Peralta Board of Trustees—an elected seven-member board that governs Merritt and four other Bay Area community colleges—made it a requirement of graduation that every student take one course in ethnic studies. Each college was left to decide on its own what courses might satisfy this requirement. At Merritt the list of approved courses includes all of those in the ethnic studies department, as well as several courses in history and government and language courses in Chinese.

In December 1974, Mrs. Harriet Schmitt, a fully tenured teacher who has taught courses in English, German and film at Merritt for some 18 years, decided to introduce a course called "The Culture and History of the Jewish People." In an effort to find a home for the course, she first asked the faculty in ethnic studies to accept it as an offering in their department. However, they wasted not time in telling Schmitt that they wanted no part of her or her course.

Shortly thereafter, "The Culture and History of the Jewish People" was accredited by both the history and humanities departments, and it was in fact offered during the winter semester of 1976. Meanwhile, Schmitt persisted in her efforts to have the course declared as satisfying the ethnic studies requirement. A committee was formed to study the matter, and meetings were held at which Schmitt and past and present members of the ethnic studies department argued their cases. Schmitt proposed that if the ethnic studies requirement were kept, it should be more clearly defined, and that "Students should be given the opportunity of studying their own ethnic group as well as becoming familiar with a representative sample of others."

In response, the head of the ethnic studies department declared that a course in Jewish studies was not needed because several members of the department already dealt with the Jewish exploitation of Third World minorities in their courses; and Newton submitted a position paper in which he argued against the Schmitt course because "Jewish people are not an oppressed minority in the USA," citing their higher-than-average incomes. Newton apparently carried the day, since the dean of instruction ruled on March 4, 1976, that "I have interpreted the requirement for Ethnic Studies to relate wholly to Third World People (*i.e.*, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, American Indian and Latin/Mexican Americans)."

Undaunted, Schmitt appealed this decision to the president of the college, who passed it along to the chancellor of the entire Peralta district, who ultimately put the matter before the elected governing board. And here matters get truly confusing. The chancellor recommended to the board that they do nothing—in other words, that they let stand the decision of Newton and the dean of instruction—but he was careful to suggest that courses other than those dealing with "Third World people" should be allowed to meet the ethnic studies requirement. He suggested, instead, that Schmitt might offer her course at *another* community college in the district that did not have a department of ethnic studies. This is tantamount to saying that Jews are an ethnic group on some campuses, but not at Merritt. It of course also overlooks the fact that Schmitt is a teacher at Merritt and not somewhere else.

The Peralta trustees held an open meeting in October at which they accepted the chancellor's recommendation to do nothing—a course that saved them the embarrassment of putting the matter to vote. Before making this non-decision they listened to four hours of heated public debate during which it became clear that the board (only two of whose members are black) wanted desperately to avoid a racial confrontation. Schmitt, during the two years that she fought on behalf of her course, has been a frequent target of anti-Semitic slurs and harrassment. She still has the option of taking her case through the courts, but even she is beginning to wonder whether the costs—both psychic and financial—are worth it.

This interesting case raises several important issues. Those who want to restrict ethnic studies to "Third World people," generally cite Executive Order 11246, which mandated affirmative action in the federal government in hiring on behalf of black, American Indian, Spanish-surnamed, and Oriental Americans. The executive order states that its nondiscrimination requirements apply to all individuals, regardless of whether or not they are members of a designated minority group. It has become clear that these two provisions—affirmative action and universal non-discrimination—are at war with each other, and that special policies on behalf of some groups frequently interfere with the rights of others. The first time this question was brought before the Supreme Court (the *DeFunis* case), it was declared moot because, while the case was moving through the courts, DeFunis had meanwhile been admitted to the University of Washington Law School and graduated. But there is another case that may reach the Supreme Court for a decision. This is the *Bakke* case. The California Supreme Court has ruled that Allan Bakke was unfairly denied admission to the University of California's Medical School at Davis because of the school's

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affirmative action admission policies.

Therefore, if proponents of restrictive ethnic studies programs want to argue by analogy to federal affirmative action, they may find the ground cut from under them. Many of them know this, and so they tend to bolster their argument with claims that only "Third World peoples" have been discriminated against in the US, or that the quantity and quality of their suffering entitles them to special treatment, or that only a "different" skin color qualifies one to be a member of an ethnic group. These "more ethnic than thou" assertions can degenerate into a shouting match in which the numbers of Jews killed during the Holocaust are matched against blacks killed as a result of slavery, and the discrimination suffered by Polish and Irish immigrants is compared to that endured by Japanese and Puerto Ricans. The exercise is thoroughly unedifying.

Sheila K. Johnson

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Cargill's Private Empire

The Grain Drain

"The confrontation between the multinational corporation and its enemies," Richard J. Barnet and Ronald Müller write in *Global Reach*, "promises to influence the shape of human society in the last third of the century more than any other political drama of our time." This summer, while Frank Church was making an abortive run for the presidency, his Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations provided the first real introduction to those who control the food we eat.

The fact that six trading companies control over 90 percent of US grain exports first came to public attention in the summer of 1972. Then, the Soviet Union secretly bought from the big companies—Cargill, Bunge, Cook, Dreyfus, Continental and Garnac—the last of the world's grain reserves (America's), triggering a 50 percent increase in retail food prices, providing the Republican administration with a constituency in favor of getting the government out of agriculture, generating full agricultural production and forcing farmers onto the international market.

This June, for the first time, officers of a major trading company reluctantly appeared in public to describe their operations and answer questions. Sen. Dick Clark, temporary chairman of the subcommittee, noted that America's role as the largest food power in the world has major foreign policy implications. "The United States exported an average of 30 percent of all the grain that it produces," he said. "Our production and export policy sets the world-wide . . . price, and that price is reflected here in the United States; what the consumer pays for food and what farmers earn depends upon it."

Cargill, whose corporate headquarters are in Minneapolis, is the largest grain trading company in the world. In 1974, it exported 29 percent of wheat exported from the US, 16 percent of corn, 18 percent of soybeans, 22 percent of sorghum, 42 percent of barley, and 32 percent of oats. The Agribusiness Accountability Project pointed out in 1972 that if Cargill weren't a privately held company, it would be listed 27th on the *Fortune* 500 listing of America's largest companies, above Bethlehem Steel, Kraftco and Lockheed.

In order to export and market grain, Group Vice President Walter B. Saunders explained, "[T]he owners of Cargill established a new corporate entity; Tradax International, in Panama. Organizing the new company in Panama enabled us to conduct our trading activities in the international grain market on the same tax footing available to our major competitors." However, as Corporate Vice President William R. Pearce—once a special trade representative for President Nixon—pointed out, "Panama is not an ideal location for managing a trade business, and therefore that suggested the wisdom of negotiating a management arrangement with a firm that could be positioned in a market or in a country like Switzerland." Geneva was picked because, as Saunders explained, "It was centrally located, had excellent travel and communications facilities. . .possessed a multi-lingual tradition to match the international character of the grain markets, had a history of economic and political stability and of freedom from exchange controls and levied only limited corporate taxes." Also, he said, "[I]t's a nice place for executives to live . . ."

So in simpler terms, the Minneapolis-based firm set up a dummy company in Panama to escape the payment of taxes. Then it set up a Swiss company called Tradax Geneva. The Panamanian company contracted with Tradax Geneva to co-ordinate Cargill's international organizations—Tradax England, Deutsche Tradax and other companies in the 36 or so countries in which it does business.

It's all Cargill, but the complications have a major advantage: unless you're inside, it's hard to know what's going on. For example, when the Soviets buy American grain, they no longer go to Cargill in the US, as they did in 1972. Instead, the Soviets buy from Tradax Geneva, which, as the Cargill people explain it, is closer to the Soviet Union and can better service the customer. This makes it difficult to keep track of Soviet purchases, because if the Russians buy from Tradax Geneva, US law can't require that Cargill report the purchase. The grain *might* come from elsewhere. It could come from Argentina, for example—Tradax Argentina selling to Tradax Geneva selling to the Soviets.

The Cargill executives say that each of the companies (although all are owned by the same people) has its own profit center and competes with its siblings. This means

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that, by law, Cargill has to report its sale of American grain to Tradax Geneva, but there is no requirement that Tradax Geneva in turn report Soviet purchases. In fact, as Cargill Chairman Erwin Kelm testified, Cargill has sold as much as 50 percent of its grain to its own subsidiaries abroad. Under questioning from Sen. Clark, Saunders helped out his boss: "We operate as two separate companies. Tradax actually buys from Cargill, and of course Cargill sells to Tradax, so on any given day if Cargill happens to have the most competitive offer on the market, Tradax will buy from Cargill, and if they don't they'll buy from somebody else." As a result, there is no way that the United States—which has tried to impose four embargoes in the past three years—can place an effective embargo on grain because we don't know who is buying it, where it will finally go, and there is, in fact, no way of proving that it is American. (Canadian, Argentinian and American wheat of the same grade are indistinguishable *and* the IRS has a hard time figuring out the tax bill.)

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is building storage bins inside Russia and leases storage space from Cargill and other companies outside Russia. Richard Gilmore, in a staff report to the subcommittee, wrote, "[a] plausible explanation can be suggested for Soviet interest in storing their US grain in Western European elevators. This option offers at least two main advantages for the USSR. It could enable them to buy in excess of any formal commitment to the US government to limit their purchases of corn and wheat. Secondly, it could facilitate re-exporting this grain to points outside the Soviet Union in violation of the Grain Agreement." In fact, Cargill and the other companies do handle Soviet exports to Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Barnet and Müller dislike using "multinational" to describe the "global" companies that are changing the way the world does business. *Multinational* implies that foreign operations are simply international branches of a home office. Rather, "The power of the global corporation derives from its unique capacity to use finance, technology and advanced marketing skills to integrate production on a worldwide scale and thus to realize the ancient capitalist dream of One Great Market. This cosmopolitan vision stands as a direct challenge to traditional nationalism." This conflict came out most strongly when wheat farmers from North Dakota testified before the subcommittee on how their grain is marketed. Seventy-five percent of America's wheat crop is exported, and North Dakota's 30,000 wheat farmers produce 15 percent of the nation's crop. "The pyramid of power, as I see it," Myron Just, North Dakota's Agriculture Commissioner, said, "is 30,000 North Dakota farmers selling through about 500 grain elevators in North Dakota, farmer-owned but discreetly Minneapolis-run, in my estimation, into. . .one grain exchange, which in turn sells mostly to six large exporters."

The Minneapolis Grain Exchange is the largest cash grain market in the world. In theory, the price a North Dakota farmer receives is based on the price reported from that exchange. Presumably, the price is a summary of actual sales made on the floor of the exchange. In fact, a committee—one member of which happens to be Cargill—notes the transactions and reports what the price of wheat is for that business day. If no sales are made, the committee reports what the price would be had there been sales. (The Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Justice Department are jointly investigating for possible price fixing.) That price is reported by the wire services, radio and television, newspapers and USDA as *the* free market price. Then, buyers in Minneapolis call up the elevators and say how much they're willing to pay, discounting the cost of shipment to Minneapolis.

The buyers are representatives of the major trading companies, and, as Verl Loyland of the Finley Farmers Grain and Elevator Company in North Dakota testified, about 90 percent of the time the prices quoted are the same. Sen. Clark asked, "How can various major grain companies who are doing business in various parts of the world, some of them who are long in supply, some of them who are short in supply, all of which have different demands and so forth, how can they call you up and all of them. . .offer you exactly the same price on many occasions?" Loyland answered, "Well, to us it's obvious. They decide what they are going to price it at."

Commissioner Just said that farmers have been making efforts to market their grain directly, but "[I]t makes it not only extremely difficult for us, as a small group, to deal in terms of moving it out of the US at the Gulf, or at Duluth, or at Portland, but also for foreign buyers to receive the grain; because . . . Cargill, or Continental, or Bunge may own all the port facilities there."

By keeping farm prices low, the grain companies are able to export it cheaply abroad. This, in turn, increases demand in the US and helps raise domestic food prices. In 1971, for example, a federal judge ruled that Cargill had illegally rigged the wheat market at the Chicago Board of Trade, raising prices artificially high.

In November of this year, reacting to Cargill's late reply to subcommittee questions, one observer suggested that Cargill helped precipitate the 1973 soybean embargo. Soybeans are primarily produced in the US and Brazil. Cargill is a major factor in processing and marketing in both countries. The company admits that it cancelled 40 percent of its contracts during that year. The implication is that Cargill may have reported more sales than were actually made, precipitating panic buying, causing an American embargo, resulting in skyrocketing prices and a fortune in profits. Then, the company cancelled the allegedly bogus orders. Farmers

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got relatively low prices. Domestic consumers—for whom the country's second largest crop is a primary raw material in the production of meat, poultry, milk and margarine—paid more for food. Cargill and the other companies were also able to use the embargo to promote expanded production in Latin America in order to compete with the American export market and increase corporate independence from the US.

Sen. Clark originally announced that the subcommittee planned to hold hearings on all the grain companies and then call government officials to ask how corporate activities influence food and agricultural policy decisions. However, the election intervened, and in September the investigative body was renamed the Subcommittee on Foreign Economic Policy, leaving staff uncertainty as to whether grain companies are still in their jurisdiction. The investigation is temporarily suspended—with the other five companies and government officials yet to testify. Perhaps the Cargill disclosures have already revealed too much about how our agricultural policy is actually made. The new Senate leadership may decide not to resume the hearings for fear of offending the powerful grain dealers, or for reasons of its own. Grain company ties on Capitol Hill are strong, as campaign contributions indicate, but with on-going investigations by the FTC, the ICC, Justice, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, USDA, and various grand juries, it will be increasingly difficult to ignore the power held by these global corporations.

Joel Solkoff

Mr. Solkoff, a Washington writer, is recipient of a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

André Malraux

The Poignant Silence

by Stanley Hoffmann

There are so many Malraux that it seems hard to find the continuity behind his incarnations and his works. He was both a man of action and an intellectual. Indeed, in a country whose greatest poet had written that ours is "a world in which action is not the sister of dreams," and whose greatest intellectuals had always at least flirted with action, no writer had ever carried a passion for it so far.

The man of action first appeared as the somewhat dubious adventurer in search of abandoned yet profitable statues in Cambodia. He quickly became the champion of anticolonialism in Indochina, the apostle of revolution and antifascism who not only celebrated the heroes of Chinese communism, but actually fought against Franco in Spain and warned Europe against Hitler. He reappeared, at the end of the German occupation of France, as a Resistance hero, as a military commander in the battle for Alsace—and as a Gaullist. Soon, the febrile fighter for the causes of the Left became the Minister of Culture for de Gaulle, the official propagandist for the Fifth Republic, the solemn and incantatory purveyor of funeral orations for the martyrs and artists commemorated by the regime. Many of his contemporaries—including his skillful biographer, Jean Lacouture—never quite understood or forgave him for that metamorphosis.

The artist was no less multiform than the actor. The early decadent fantasies, marked by symbolism much more than by surrealism, were soon superseded by the extraordinary novels that put the techniques of the modern movie at the disposal of grand mythopoetic scenes. Their characters debated hectic intellectual and metaphysical arguments in the midst of jungles, battles, bombings and executions. Literature as the arena of the fight between man's will and his destiny, the novel as the ordeal that tests man's nature by placing him in extreme situations—not as the mirror of society in which characters reveal their individuality in ordinary trials and tribulations—this is what we owe to Malraux the novelist; all of Camus and much of Sartre have come out of that mold.

Even while he was in the headlines, leaping from novel to novel, and turning episodes from *Man's Hope* into a film masterpiece, he was working on his essays on art. That vein began in the 1920s as a confrontation between the Asian arts of contemplation and the Western arts that celebrate man. It flowed from the

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1930s to the present into an enormous series of books (the last of which appeared the day before Malraux' death); they examine all major styles and artists in painting and sculpture. While he was meditating on the "imaginary museum" of world art, he was publishing, in bits and pieces, what he called anti-memoirs, a mosaic of rewritten fragments of his earlier novels, of conversations with friends and of records of his encounters with De Gaulle, Mao or Picasso.

It is not surprising if the French, who had gotten used to that combination of *enfant terrible* and well-established luminary, and who met Malraux regularly, either live on television or under the covers of a new volume, suddenly realized that he had occupied in the cultural life of their nation a place no one had been big enough to fill since Victor Hugo. "France is a widow," Pompidou had said when De Gaulle died, thus following that tradition of describing her as a woman which had begun with Michelet, one of the writers whom Malraux admired most. Many Frenchmen seem to have felt a comparable loss this time. And yet, there has been something embarrassed about their tributes, in two respects.

First, the commentators and the mourners seem to have been distracted by the diversity of Malraux' work, and diverted by the sensational and the spectacular in Malraux' life. However, even if he was one of those artists whose personal drama seems staged so as to force attention to their works and ends up sometimes eclipsing them, he never showed any interest in the private Malraux. He did his best to create a mythic one, whose function it was to transcend the "miserable little bunch of secrets" which is each person's private life, so as to take part in actions and to create works of art that would ask certain fundamental questions—just as General De Gaulle had created a public De Gaulle whose function it was, as Malraux put it, to "maintain France's honor as an invincible dream." Those questions one finds behind all of Malraux' moves and all of his works—they are the questions of Dostoevski and Nietzsche, and they were going to become the questions of a whole generation of French writers. Remember: the young Malraux bursts on the literary scene just after the end of the First World War. If God is dead, and if the easy hopes of humanism are illusions, if man thus lives in the absurd—as Malraux was the first to call the radical disharmony between man's consciousness and his destiny of death, suffering, humiliation—how can he escape from nihilism, how can he give meaning to his life?

At times, Malraux' answer seems to be: through a collective fight for the cause of freedom, which lifts the actor out of solitude and the oppressed out of humiliation (Sartre's answer, too, later on). At times, he seems to turn away from the creation of a common future toward the celebration of a collective past. For Malraux this means the great moments of national glory, as in his Gaullist threnodies, or the great styles and recurrent metamorphoses of art, "one of the secret and highest forms of the strength and the honor of being man." But the deepest answer does not change: man shall escape from nihilism by questioning destiny, by defying death in his acts or in his works, by "transforming into consciousness the widest possible experience." Nazism was nihilism: Malraux could only have been antifascist. And when the Communists became the instruments of Stalin's rule, not the agents of revolution, Malraux moved away from them.

What attracted him to Gaullism was the combination of two promises: that of the renovation of ideals derived from France's historical experience as a nation, and the promise of efficiency. A man concerned with defying destiny did not want to fight only for lost causes. The Imaginary Museum he created in his books, the Houses of Culture he promoted as Minister, do not aim at making people the complacent consumers of all arts, or at preparing a synthetic new art passively derived from the past, but at reminding us all of the innumerable ways in which artists, primitive or sophisticated, and art, sacred or humanistic, have asserted this "strength and honor," whether in religious acceptance of destiny or in revolt against it. He wanted to infuse those who have a gift of creation with the will to start anew, in debate with or in opposition to the creators of the past. His works on art are not historical essays, and art historians who discuss them miss the point entirely. They are reflections on the struggle between man and meaning, between artists and their visions, on the dialogue between different civilizations.

Man as a creator who becomes the rival of God—except that God may have all the answers, and man's glory lies in his questions; man as the servant of quarrels greater than himself—of quarrels that are those of all mankind—this has been Malraux' constant vision. His are the insights of a modern Pascal who would have wagered on faith in man rather than faith in God. Both its compelling presence and the variety of its modes of expression reflect the ambitious consistency of an author who was both Protean and Promethean. He may have been the last Romantic, but he was also the first Existentialist. And while it is easy to show that his life was not always up to his legend, it is even easier to prove that the two often coincided, and that the myths themselves always aimed at inspiring the readers with tales of great causes, noble acts or historic civilizations.

A tension for the heroic, inseparable from an age in which "destiny" took the form, not of banal deaths, but of such scourges as world wars and extermination camps; a style both spontaneously lyrical, and carefully contrived to create such unforgettable symbols of man's fate as the final scenes of the novel by that name, or the descent of the dead and dying aviators from the mountain in *Man's Hope*, or the gas hell on the Russian

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front in *Altenburg*; a hunger for seeking "change for the Absolute," that currency only religious souls possess yet so many agnostics need; a fascination for history, which crushes man yet provides him with the grandest opportunities for defiance; a passion for those "Men of History" who succeeded in deflecting its course: these are all concerns and qualities that seem almost anachronistic in an age of mediocrity, when history takes the insidious form of statistics, power is busy with mere management, and terrorism becomes the small change of heroism; when writers either return to triviality or experiment with the destruction of forms as well as characters. Hence that other embarrassment: in the prosperous France of 1976, whose politicians hurl at each other "social blueprints" without national vision, and whose youth oscillates from conformity to cynicism, Malraux seemed like an outsized relic from another age, and young writers promptly explained that he meant nothing to them.

Did Malraux himself sense this kind of disharmony? Did he project on De Gaulle, in his *Fallen Oaks*, his own disenchantment with Europe's present? He noted that the present civilization is the first to be both the conscious heir of all past ones, and devoid of values—deprived, it seems, of the will to create new ones and even of the energies of nihilism. His last "anti-memoirist" books often strike that note of derision and grotesqueness which he had, in his youth, called *le farfelu*, and which is Malraux' sardonic equivalent of Sartre's pathetic nausea. And yet, it appears that his very last book—on art—announces a new metamorphosis: the audio-visual revolution, and salutes its potential both for creation or for rediscoveries.

The aging writer who, despite a long series of personal tragedies and illnesses, kept writing until the end, and belied his unfair reputation for oracular fuzziness and rhetorical hollowness with an extraordinary attention to detail, a scrupulous reconstruction of the essence of great men's lives, words and works, and the most dazzling conversation, will remain an example of a man entirely faithful to his own ideals. Those famous ellipses and flashes of lightning which have jolted his listeners and his readers were the natural expression of one of the most incisive minds in the history of French literature. If intelligence is the art of illuminating a subject by binding together aspects that no one had yet linked or sought out, nobody has been more intelligent. But above all, after this or that aspect of his life has died down, he will at last be seen for what he is: both the greatest literary genius of a new kind of literature that tried to make sense of the experiences of a horrible and tormented era without despairing of the power of artistic creation, and a man who, in all his activities, served and exemplified a country, France, of whom he said, almost 30 years ago, that "it has never been greater than when it spoke for all mankind, and this is why its silence is so poignant to hear." Malraux deserves the same epitaph; but in both cases, the silence shall not last. France will still find ways of "astonishing the world," and taking full measure of Malraux has only just begun.

Cyrus Roberts Vance

Everybody's Man

by Suetonius

He gazes back at us from the faded, forgotten pictures of the 1960s. Usually he is the younger unplaceable figure a step behind the recognized men, the faces and reputations so soon to atrophy. He stands a bit stooped on alien, windswept airfields beside bloated briefcases and McGeorge Bundy. Slightly blurred, he listens from the discreet back row of chairs around the wall of the Cabinet Room, while at the table (the front row too visible, as it happened, to survive the corporate disaster) Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk and Walt Rostow exchange earnest looks with Lyndon Johnson. Later, with the same group, he sits erect and alert on the shadowed patio of the LBJ ranch as Curtis LeMay admonishes them on the nuances and rewards of imaginative targeting.

Now he is back. The close dark hair is ripened gray. Exile has put wrinkles into the angular, immobile face. He comes from that other decade as a vague and thus acceptable memory. He is henceforth to be captioned Secretary of State.

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Those awkward, set-piece photographs are important, of course, much as we would like to forget them. They hold the few public tracks of Cyrus Vance and the ethic he represents. His record, it is true, has often been faint, in part because in that world, too tangible records are liabilities, in part because such men never leave much behind anyway. In 672 pages disrobing the more conspicuous of the best and brightest, David Halberstam accorded him only three passing paragraphs, less than one each for the four years Vance was McNamara's deputy secretary of defense and among the half dozen principal executors of the war policy. In its editorial hailing Carter's appointment of Vance, *The New York Times* pronounced it "bizarre" even to have thought of ruling out such a man.

That observation followed logically, no doubt, from the fact that "Punch" Sulzberger had put Vance on the *Times'* board of directors. Vance also sits as a director at IBM, Pan Am, and a Lehman Corporation mutual fund. A trustee of Yale, the Rockefeller Foundation, New York's Presbyterian Hospital, his clubs are the best: Century and Links in New York, Metropolitan in Washington.

The obligatory word here is "sound." According to Averell Harriman, Clark Clifford, assorted former Vance associates, and the anonymous consensus consulted by the President-elect, Cyrus Vance is "sound." In the sociology of establishment power, it is faint though nonetheless annointing praise, more emblem than adjective. It subsumes bright, attentive, reliable, diligent, loyal, cautious, discreet and, as needs be, unquestioning—all of which there is ample evidence the new Secretary of State will be. It also customarily excludes brilliant, imaginative, original, independent, publicly candid, and as needs be insubordinate or repentant—and, true to form, no peer or editorial writer has accused Vance of being any of these.

He won the badge with an impressive career, ascended to it with patrician ease, luck, good schooling and an austere ability to cling to the right contacts. His father died when he was only five, and he was soon sent away from home in Clarksburg, West Virginia to a private academy in Switzerland, the Kent School in Connecticut, and on to Yale and Yale Law, graduating into the Navy in 1942. He returned in 1947 to a prestigious Manhattan law practice where he served the ritual firm apprenticeship for the next 10 years. What today makes the failure of the critical instinct among journalists all the more mindless is that, in many ways more vividly than any of the other establishment careers long since ruined by Vietnam, Vance's career joined and embodied the worst historic currents of our post-war folly.

Like the nervous combativeness of the time, Vance was launched by *Sputnik*. When, in October 1957, Senate Majority Leader Johnson revived a musty defense preparedness subcommittee to study the Soviet space program, he hired a prosperous New York Democrat named Edwin Weisl, who happened also to be Vance's patron partner in the firm of Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett. Vance came along as an assistant investigator. The inquiry was efficient, short-lived and didn't strain LBJ's relations with the Eisenhower administration. But it placed Vance with Johnson, and it identified him as one of the legions of in-and-out Democratic lawyers available for the Executive office in a restoration. Vance and Weisl returned to Washington briefly in 1960 to do a similar special inquiry for Johnson on the next national alarm, the "missile gap." Though comparatively slipshod, this study at least uncovered the basic nonsense of the term—a discovery they tactfully spared the public. Meanwhile in the 1960 campaign, strategic issues degenerated into the hysteria which fueled the next round in the arms race. Later that summer, as Johnson pondered in his Los Angeles Convention suite Kennedy's offer of the vice presidency, Vance was there, again in tow to Weisl. But, unlike his sponsor, Vance urged LBJ to run.

Vance's distinction over the next eight years was to combine this original fealty to Johnson with the polish and amateur bravado of the Kennedy regime, the technocracy of style and credentials which then seemed an adequate equivalent for genuine knowledge and sophistication about government. Among our buried memories is the caprice of it all. Asked which service secretary he wanted to be, Vance, then a 43-year-old general practice lawyer, replied that he guessed the navy, since that's where he was in the war. Just then McNamara thought some administrative experience essential for the service jobs, so Vance became instead general counsel of the Pentagon. There he hired another new and eager New York lawyer, Joe Califano, who remembered later the exhilaration and dash of their gifted amateurism as they began the consolidation of the anarchic Pentagon intelligence agencies by reading the National Security Act! (The agencies had been consolidated by law already, of course; only the anarchy and the distortions and the duplication remained.) Presumably having proved his administrative skills, Vance became Secretary of the Army in 1962; in 1964 he became McNamara's LBJ-certified deputy.

At the upper reaches of the Pentagon he was with uncanny frequency an almost unnoticed, always discreet presence at fateful junctures. When the first volatile and controversial intelligence on the Gulf of Tonkin attacks came to LBJ, Vance was among those who bought it and vouched for it. When Bundy made his famous February 1965 telephone call from Saigon after the rocketing of Pleiku, the call that recommended bombing Hanoi while Kosygin was there, Vance was the man on the other end of the line in Washington who promptly relayed Bundy's proposal to Johnson and the rest of the advisers, and then voted unanimously with them to call in the air strikes. The following summer,

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Vance was acting secretary of defense when LBJ summarily ordered, in McNamara's absence, the commitment of 175,000 troops to Vietnam that would make the eventual half million nearly inevitable. At the close of 1966 Vance was one of the tiny handful of senior men responsible for the "Marigold" debacle in which the uncoordinated bombing of Hanoi destroyed an authentic and long-cultivated mediation effort through the Polish government. And though he resigned with a severe back ailment in 1967, Vance was called back by a beleaguered Johnson for a special mission to mediate a Cyprus dispute and later to calm the South Koreans after the seizure of the *Pueblo*.

In March 1968 Vance was one of the establishment "wise men" telling Johnson the war would not be sustained after Tet by either Wall Street or the country at large. Finally, in the twilight of the regime, he was Harriman's deputy (and once more Johnson's man among the Kennedy people and the bureaucrats) at the futile byplay of the Paris peace talks. From all this he returned to the prescribed exile in his old New York firm, quietly advised Senator Muskie in 1972, became president of the New York Bar Association (where among other local duties he has deplored an obstreperous public campaign to open the Rosenberg files), joined the right committees, signed the right bland reports, met and endorsed Carter, and generally said as little as possible about foreign policy in time-honored preparation for the appointment that he has won at last.

Vance's bureaucratic record is entwined in contradictions. He was insistently courageous in ending racial discrimination in military base housing. Yet he administered the army at the same time with no apparent instinct, let alone remedy, for its malignant institutional rot in other respects. He stood by McNamara faithfully in battles with the joint chiefs over competing technology and missions in Vietnam. Yet in 1967, by Ernest Fitzgerald's testimony, "CRV" were the initials that approved, without even a routine check with the auditors, a huge chunk of the air force's billion-dollar spending scandal on the F-111, an episode Fitzgerald later called in understatement "high-priced, high-level hankypanky." Out of office an advocate of arms control, in office Vance was instrumental in McNamara's 1968 decision to buy a worthless anti-Chinese ABM as a sop to intramural Pentagon politics. Now in favor (like Carter) of limiting conventional arms traffic, Vance as deputy secretary of defense presided personally and enthusiastically over a lavish program of Pentagon arms sales promotion that has made the US the world's leading weapons merchant.

The most fashionable cliché about Vance is that he has been, no matter what his faults, a successful diplomatic "trouble-shooter," the technical virtue that excuses past vices in a foreign minister. The reality, alas, is more ambiguous. In January 1964 Vance flew off to quell a Panama Canal Zone riot that eventually petered out without benefit of diplomacy, and, as the Carter administration will discover all too soon, the underlying crisis remains. In 1965 Vance went to the Dominican Republic with Bundy and State Department assistant secretary Thomas Mann; the cables recorded conflicting substantive views between Bundy and Mann, nothing for Vance, and a local crisis that dragged on long after the US negotiators left. Over Cyprus in 1967 he bravely shuttled between Ankara and Athens with a painful back, but all the while on a tight leash of instructions from Rusk and Rostow, and with a "diplomacy" that amounted to the same old arms-aid ransom to the Greek junta and Turkish generals, weapons shipments over the ensuing years that in a real sense made the 1967 "settlement" a parent of the 1974 disaster. In Korea after the *Pueblo* incident, his task was to proffer the same sort of arms pay-off to the Koreans, sweetened by an implicit silence on the mounting human rights outrages of the Park regime. In Paris later in 1968, as deputy at the Vietnam peace talks, there is simply nothing of the man himself visible through the ceaseless bickering and bureaucratic makework; when Kissinger took over the secret talks with Hanoi months afterward, he would discover to his disgust that Vance and Harriman had led their delegation to Paris without even rudimentary position papers on a political settlement.

Over it all, from the "missile gap" inquiry to the Paris talks, there is the recurrent, unmistakable odor of gentlemanly submission. There is no palpable achievement beyond the endurance and promotion of the man himself, the classic survivor. No outrage, no spirited defense, no remorse, no abiding conviction, indeed no visible view clutters the trail. It was a career studded with opportunities to educate us, to disarm the silly awful myths that tyrannize foreign affairs. Left behind is only the debris of foolish policies. The void is frightening. Even the most gentle reading of the Vance résumé shows he knows next to nothing beyond what he learned by osmosis at the Pentagon or in corporate law offices of international economics, of the new generation of strategic weaponry, of currents in the Middle East.

In the new Secretary of State, the bureaucrats, especially Vance's old colleagues in the Pentagon, have a familiar and congenial institutional adversary. Vance's intelligence is the alert but disembodied shrewdness of the caretaker, unanchored by the sense of substance and history that alone rescues politics from fey or tragic administration. He got here, of course, by the want of competition in a decaying establishment, the residue of a failed generation. At 60 and as Secretary of State, however, he will survive nicely for a time, if only by the stunningly superficial journalism of papers like *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, in whose editorial welcome there was scarcely mention of the word Vietnam, much less what

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the man had done or been, what he represented beyond the titles.

Henry Kissinger, hardly missing the point (or the favorable comparison that's coming to help exculpate him), heralded Vance as "outstanding." In truth the new Secretary is precisely the sort of sometime bureaucrat Kissinger detested in his books and defeated with no quarter in the west basement of Nixon's White House. Vance would have been no match there. And this raises the question—the same one that was asked when William Rogers became Nixon's Secretary of State—of how Vance will indeed deal with Carter or Carter's man for foreign policy in the White House. To the question of whether Cyrus Vance would, based on past performance with LBJ, stand up and cross Jimmy Carter any time soon, the answer can only be a tremulous "no." When he turned on LBJ with the "wise men" after Tet in 1968, the corpse of the regime was already cooling, and Vance was in a respectable crowd. It is perverse that we now celebrate Vance's dullness as some cathartic to Kissinger's flamboyance, as if undemocratic habits, furtiveness and self-protection were not common and fundamental faults. Ultimately, what will be lost is only virtuosity—some flair amid the deception.

Vance invites instant and justifiably favorable comparison to William Rogers, Nixon's pathetic first Secretary of State. The real model is much worse: Dean Rusk. It was Rusk, Vance's bitter rivals mutter, who secured the appointment; it is Rusk's bureaucratic legacy and style that he now takes into office, bereft only of the costly tool of military intervention. It would have been "almost ridiculous" to appoint someone without Vance's experience, said President-elect Carter. Vance may be what Carter wants; can he be what Carter and the country really need?

The Sorrows of Old Werther

by Shlomo Katz

Mind you, I am not complaining.

Why should I complain? Who are we SS'ers—Social Security beneficiaries—to complain? We are grateful, believe me. We are grateful, honestly and truly, because, well, we know how much worse it would be without it. And you, all of you youngsters under 65, are good children, and you are taking care of your papas and mamas. So why should we complain?

Only sometimes, on the third of each month, as we finger that brown envelope, there is a little sorrow in our hearts, because—it's hard to explain—but somehow we feel that it should be different. How different? Well, let's start at the beginning. Take me, for example. So I went to the SS office to apply for my benefits. Tell me, have you ever been to an SS office? No? You haven't? Of course not. You are young. Well, then, have you ever been to an employment office? Looking for a job? During a time of depression, I mean. When there are no jobs. Well, that's what an SS office is like. Those rows of hard chairs. That calling out of numbers. That waiting and waiting and waiting.

Why couldn't you young people arrange it a little different. After all, we are not as young as we used to be. Show a little regard for us. I mean have soft upholstered chairs—even used ones would do—and coffee served, and maybe a little music in the background, and maybe the receptionist should be a little less gruff. Why not? Would it cost you much? A little graciousness never hurt anybody. But like this, you make us feel like it is the '30s all over again. And why should you rub it in like that? We remember it only too well as it is.

Do I mean to say that we love you youngsters under 65 any less for this? God forbid. How could we! After all, you are our very own offspring. But we must have failed—I mean we must have failed to bring you up properly, otherwise you'd show a little more delicacy and just a bit more regard for our feelings. For it's the little things that count.

Take for instance those brown envelopes in which you send us our monthly pittance. Nobody will persuade me that the color wasn't chosen intentional-

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ly, to make us feel even more depressed than we usually feel. It's not a color; it's an insult. Only hard core pornography is mailed in envelopes this color. I mean, why not use some pastel shades to cheer us up. And you could also personalize them a bit. For instance, why not go through your records, and when one of us SS'ers has a birthday, enclose a birthday greeting with the remittance. And the same on Father's Day and Mother's Day and Christmas and Armistice Day and Flag Day. It's little things like this that count; they add up. You do these things in your commercial and personal dealings, but where we, elderly people, are concerned it's the same ugly brown envelope month in and month out. Don't you think we have feelings that you treat us this way?

That's it. You think we have no feelings whatsoever, and you don't hide your hostility. We loom big in your eyes. You begrudge us every mouthful of food we buy with the measly remittances you send us. They are eating us out of house and home, you yell. I have heard it myself over the radio. One youngster, a senator or something like that, threatened that by 1985 all Social Security funds will be used up because we SS'ers gobble up so much. And another, a congressman I think, went him one better and said: no, not by 1985 but by 1981. And a third one, an alderman or sheriff or something like that says: not by 1981 but by 1979. And so it goes on and on. One would think you'd all be rich if it weren't for us.

Oh, I am sorry. Many a time I look at that ugly brown envelope and my eyes become filmed with tears and I see it as a kind of palimpsest. Here it is, all covered with print. You pretend to worry about us; you want us to let you know right away in case we move. You instruct the mailman to let you know at once if we change residence. You pretend to be concerned lest a check fail to reach us. But underneath all that outpouring of what looks like concern I seem to detect another inscription: Drop Dead, Already.

You think I exaggerate? Well, maybe a little. You not only grudge us our pitiful allotment, you also mock us. Want to know how? Well, this way: there is that bank—I forget its name—and maybe 10 times a day it keeps harping over the radio that I and other SS'ers should arrange to have our Social Security checks sent directly to it and they would be put into savings accounts. They don't even want us to see the miserable checks and to hold them briefly in our arthritic fingers. Why. . .why even Dagwood is allowed by Blondie to at least look at his weekly check before kissing it good-bye. Savings! What does that smart banker think we do with out allotments? Stash them away in the mattress? Doesn't he know that, except maybe in a short month like February when it isn't a leap year, a check doesn't last the month?

Well, this mockery coming on top of everything else made me mad and I decided to do something about it. So Monday morning, bright and early, nine o'clock on the nose, I called the bank. I want to talk to the president, I shouted. What about? a girl asked and I could tell by her voice that she was a dropout from something or other. About my Social Security, I told her. You want to arrange to have it deposited to your account? she wanted to know. Look, honey, I said, you connect me with the president of your bank and I'll explain it all to him.

She didn't answer, but I heard some muttering in the background, and then—then there was the dialtone. They cut me off. They actually dared to cut me off, me a senior citizen who had worked hard and honestly all his life and. . .and. . . .

No. This, they couldn't do to me. This, they wouldn't get away with. So I dashed down the three flights of stairs—well, not exactly dashed. . .we SS'ers, our dashing days are over—and I hurried to the bank.

I want to see the president, I announced in no uncertain terms.

They saw right away who they had to deal with, that they couldn't put me off with alibis, so they took me to an office, and there was the president, or the manager, or somebody. A big shot, anyway. And I explained it all to him; told him what was on my mind and how he was mocking us SS'ers.

He only smiled. Here, he says, let me show you how it's all for your benefit. You put your SS allotment in a savings account and it earns interest for you, it works

"How sick may I get for $537?"

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for you, and all you have to do is stand by, I mean sit by, and watch it grow.

And what will I use for food and rent and all the rest of it?

Why, we'll give you a loan, he said. At low interest. Not as low as we pay you, but low.

Well, he was a smart kid, and only in his 40s, and he got around me. I felt all along that there was something wrong about his arithmetic, but I couldn't put my finger on just what it was. So I ended up by doing as he suggested. He was satisfied and I was glad to please him. He promised to send me the loan money in a day or so, after they checked my references.

As I walked out of the bank, a young fellow—hardly more than a boy, maybe 15 or 16 years old—who had been leaning against the wall, detached himself and joined me. He poked something in my back; I don't know what it was, it felt like his index finger, and I guess he hadn't pared his nails in a long time, and muttered: give me your wallet and shut up. So I did. I only had a couple of dollars and my Medicare card in it—it was the end of the month. And also it might not have been his index finger after all. Besides, he looked disadvantaged. But as he rapidly walked away, I muttered under my breath: just you wait another 50 years or so and you'll know how it feels.

Yes, we get old and our habits change. Take me for instance. I always like to read the papers. When I was young I read the news mostly. Then, later, it was the editorials, nice meaty discussions. But since I became an SS'er, it's the obit page that I turn to first. You can learn a lot from the obit page. I have discovered some very interesting facts. For instance, that the late 60s and 70s are killers. Stay way from them if you possibly can. Go into hiding. Move out of town. But if you succeed in reaching the 80s, you are pretty safe. And if, with luck, you get into the 90s, you are practically immortal. Why, weeks sometimes pass without the report of a person in his 90s dying. Yes, and those who survive the 90s almost never die, with very few exceptions. Well, there was one case recently of a man who died at the age of 103, but he had been a movie mogul. And that holds out hope for us, for we SS'ers always disdained movie moguls and the very thought of being one was repugnant to us.

So all we SS'ers have to do is sort of hold our breath and pull through out 60s and 70s. But for someone like me, who still has a baker's dozen to go before reaching the lucky state, it's difficult. For that matter, it's hard for all of us SS'ers. What, in the end, have we to look forward to? A slippery sidewalk, a bad fall, a broken hip followed by pneumonia, and that's that. Kaput.

But that can't be the end. There must be something more.

I will have you know that we SS'ers perform many useful functions and are essential to the ongoing life style. I will not dwell on our past, nor point out what is well known: that we were solid citizens, we paid our taxes, we stopped for red lights and, in season, we praised the Lord and passed the ammunition. But even how we make the scene livable just by being here. Can you imagine what a city like New York would be like if everybody were under 65? Unlivable—that's what it would be. Instead of old people getting mugged so many more younger people would be victimized. You wouldn't like that, would you? We sort of temper the social climate.

And we also help *you* financially. Again I see you smiling condescendingly. I can just hear you saying to yourselves: here we give these SS'ers tax-free handouts every month from our hard-earned earnings, and they claim to help *us*. Well, smile if it pleases you. We like to see you smile. You are our children, after all. But has it occurred to you what a big share of our allotments we give right back to you in the form of doctors' fees, surgeons' fees, and all those bottled goods we buy from the drug stores. Silly children that you are, do you really think we believe you can do us any good? But we go to all these doctors and dentists and drug stores anyway. Why not? We put them through college and now we don't want to see them sitting idly in their offices and drug stores, twiddling their thumbs or working crossword puzzles. They might feel neglected, or even rejected, by us, and that wouldn't be good for them. So don't be surprised if we really don't take them very seriously. So what if the doctor says: here, take these three times a day. We smile and say: yes, yes. And next time around when we come to see him again, we assure him that we followed his instructions exactly. You have to be indulgent with children, especially when they are your own.

But we do much more than that for you youngsters under 65. We die for you.

You are not smiling now. I see that now you are indignant. But as soon as I explain it to you you will see for yourselves how right I am.

Has it occurred to you that most of the dying in this country is being done by people on Social Security? Yes, this is so. You can check the statistics yourselves. Out of every thousand people in this country about 13 die every year, and of these 13 at least 10 are on SS. Now where would you be without us SS'ers? For if 13 out of every thousand must die every year, *someone* must do it. If we didn't do the dying, I'll let you guess who would.

Well, we don't want or expect gratitude for this. But a little appreciation would be in order. You don't begrudge special benefits for vets. And it is only right that you shouldn't. You send them to college. But why can't you show a little understanding for our sacrifices, that we lay down our lives in order to meet the statistical requirements of 13 deaths for every thousand of population? And you can't fool around with statistics. You know that.

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Only the other day a friend of mine, also on SS, complained to me bitterly on a very delicate subject. I didn't think I'd mention it here, but what the hell, as long as I am being frank let me be totally frank. I am of course referring to s-x. It's a problem. Just because we are 65 and over doesn't mean it's not a problem. And what can we do about it? Rather, what do you youngsters under 65 allow us to do about it? Figure it out for yourselves: a man gets an SS allotment of, say, $186.34—this after the recent increase of six percent granted us by Congress. Now, let's be realistic. At $20 a throw you can't go very far on this. I realize that this is the going rate in Utah where, because of transportation costs and that polygamy business, there may be a sellers' market. But even so, even assuming that s-x is cheaper in other parts of the country, one still can't go far when one is on SS.

Sure, I can just hear you muttering: well, become congressmen. Then you may have the use of the secretarial pool and the government will foot the bill.

But now you are mocking us again. For to become a congressman one first has to run for Congress, and you know very well that past 65 running is not our strong point. I was following the recent Olympics in Montreal and not a single SS'er got as much as an honorable mention. Of course, it may have been discrimination pure and simple. All the same, please don't ask us to run for anything.

Yes, we are like you in every respect, and it's only right you should realize it. For instance, you have your dirty words and we have ours. We SS'ers keep our conversation clean when talking to you, and you should do the same for us. But you don't. I was just now speaking of Congress, and that reminded me of an unpleasant little incident that happened to me recently. It was election time, and one young whippersnapper—50ish, maybe 55—tried to collar the over-65 vote in my neighborhood and held a meeting inviting all senior citizens to come listen to him. I went. Why not? What else have we SS'ers to do? He was running for something, I can't recall what. Well, he started his speech and it was intolerable. It was all about grave problems and grave issues and grave consequences. People near me fidgeted uncomfortably and me—my flash point is not very high, so I got up and appealed to the chairman to call the young man, the speaker I mean, to order. There were maybe 60 or 70 of us SS'ers in the audience and he had no right to insult us that way. It was positively cruel.

The young man listened to my protest and didn't turn a hair. I don't think he even understood why I was protesting. Well, he said just as cool as can be: would it please you better if I talked of burning issues or burning problems?

Without knowing it, he touched on a sore spot, for only some weeks before that a young lady addressed our Golden Age Club and urged us to insert a clause in our wills asking that we be cremated if and when the time comes. She appealed to us on grounds of ecology. We are taking up too much of the shrinking green space with all our dying, she said. That meeting broke up in an uproar, for this you must know that if there is anything we SS'ers dread more than dying it's being burned after we die—it's a kind of combination of claustrophobia and fear of fire.

So I shouted to the young man: don't you threaten me with burning. St. Paul already settled that point.

Well, what about the Apostle St. Paul? he wanted to know. He declared long ago, loud and clear, I said, that it's better to bury than to burn. The candidate looked blank, so I and a few others walked out. We were not going to tolerate that kind of taunting.

Yes, we have our own code words and you young people ought to be more careful when talking to us. Take even such a simple word as parlor. To you it has all kinds of pleasant associations, and once upon a time it did also for us, but now it is better not to mention it in our presence. To you a parlor automatically suggests a beauty parlor, or a massage parlor, or just any ordinary parlor. But we hear it and shudder, for the first thing it suggests to us is a fu----l parlor—it is difficult for one of us SS'ers even to pronounce it or to spell it out.

And once about a year ago a proposed organization of SS'ers died aborning on account of a word. We met, a group of us, and in the bitterness of our hearts decided to form an organization to fight for our rights, and mainly to resist the slanders directed against us for no reason at all. And then one man who had been quite a militant in his younger years became overwrought and suggested that what we needed is a real underground. He had hardly uttered the word when a deep hush fell on the group. Nobody blamed the poor man, but not another word was said about organizing, and we dispersed.

Of course, I know there already exists an organization. Gray Panthers, they call themselves. Well, God bless them. I am sure they mean well. But gray is not what our problem is about, and panthers are naturally black while we are mostly white or bald. Now, who on this earth would be scared of a bald panther?

And, oh yes, I was just now talking about elections. I didn't vote this time, even though it's the Bicentennial year. Who was there to vote for? Now, if Norman Thomas had been on the ballot. . .you can bet your life I'd have voted. I'd crawl on all fours to the polling place. But as it is. . . .

Ah, the good old '30s. I used to run to vote for Norman Thomas, meanwhile praying in my heart that FDR would get elected. It felt grand, and FDR didn't disappoint, either, and got elected again and again and again. We used to sing a song that went like this: Yes Siree, Yes Siree, Franklin D, Franklin D.

What should we sing now? Yes Siree, Jimmy C?

No, I'd rather hang my harp on the nearest willow tree.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

At Sea

Voyage of the Damned (Avco Embassy). Saul Bellow says in his new book *To Jerusalem and Back*:

> *The Holocaust may even be seen as a deliberate lesson or project in philosophical redefinition: "You religious and enlightened people. . .you think you know what a human being is. We will show you what he is, and what you are. Look at our camps and crematoria and see if you can bring your hearts to care about these millions." And it is obvious that the humanistic civilized moral imagination is inadequate. Confronted with such a "metaphysical" demonstration, it despairs and declines from despair into lethargy and sleep.*

That passage says a great deal more than this long film on the same point, but at least *Voyage of the Damned* redirects attention to an appalling episode in American history. Until January 1944 the US government under President Roosevelt did very little to help the European Jews who, according to clear German plans, were to be completely destroyed. One of the defects of this film is that it makes the voyage seem a single incident. The script is based on a book I haven't read. In 1968 I read Arthur D. Morse's *While Six Million Died* in which the voyage is only one of several now-incredible acts of American indifference.

In May 1939 the German government executed one of its cleverest propaganda maneuvers. The world was complaining about their treatment of Jews, so they put the world to the test. They allowed 930 German Jews to buy passage from Hamburg to Cuba on the Hamburg-American Line's *St. Louis* and also to buy Cuban landing permits. Of these passengers 734 held US immigration quota numbers permitting them to enter the US three months to three years after arrival in Cuba. What the passengers did not know, and what the steamship line did not tell the extraordinary Captain Gustav Schroeder of the *St. Louis*, was that President Bru of Cuba had invalidated the landing permits eight days before the ship sailed.

In short, the German government deliberately sent these 930 Jews on a fruitless voyage in order to test the willingness of other countries to receive them. On board ship these passengers were treated with the utmost (secretly ironical) courtesy; they were whisked out of the humiliation of Nazi Germany into civilized life. But when they arrived in Havana on May 27, only 22 Jews were permitted to land—people who had had the foresight, and money, to get additional Cuban documents.

The following five days in Havana harbor, while feverish futile negotiations went on with the money-grubbing Cuban officials, were agony. (Just one instance: a German Jew, already in Cuba, paddled a canoe close to the ship so that his wife on board could hold up their children for him to glimpse.) On June 1st the *St. Louis* was forced to start its return voyage to Hamburg. The ship moved into American waters, and promptly a US destroyer appeared, warning them against any attempt to land passengers and ordering them out of territorial waters. Apparently Hitler had proved his point triumphantly. *Nobody* wanted those damned Jews.

On the homeward trip Captain Schroeder sailed as slowly as food and fuel would allow, to permit agents of the Joint Distribution Committee, who were furiously at work in Europe, to make other arrangements for the passengers. Schroeder established anti-suicide patrols on his ship, and he needed them. Covertly he drew up plans to wreck his ship off the English coast and to force rescue on the British. (After the war Schroeder was, with minimal decency, decorated by the West German government for his conduct. There was a man.)

At almost the last moment the JDC got agreement from Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium to accept the passengers, and Schroeder landed them at Antwerp. The last twist of the knife is that hundreds of them were nonetheless caught in the Final Solution when the Germans overran their lands of refuge.

This piteous story, chilling still, is discernible in the film that Steve Shagan and David Butler have written, that Stuart Rosenberg has directed. But they have laid on it such lashings of cliché and sentimentality that, not only have they cheapened it, they have made their motives suspect. This film could have been a memorial and a warning: it comes out a moderately promising show-biz venture.

The facts have been fiddled with slightly, mostly to heat them up. The characterizations and dialogue are at the conventional floating-Grand-Hotel level, like *The Hindenburg* and *Titanic* and *The Poseidon Adventure*. Of course these writers had to use the "cross-section" method, but it could have been done with some taste, imagination and authenticity, some indication that they knew they had to cut against this Type of picture to the legitimate reason for doing it again.

Their hamminess is equalled by the assembly-line "weepie" direction of Stuart Rosenberg and most of the casting. Leper bells ought to be hung on Sam Wanamaker and Maria Schell: the presence of either is a taint. Orson Welles, here a rich Cuban industrialist complete with big cigars, has become the club bore of Filmland, the man who once did some terrific things and for many years now has been coasting on our knowledge of them. He's intolerable. Even some good actors, like Oskar Werner and Faye Dunaway and Lee Grant, are pushed into various kinds of posings.

A few valid performances convey some of the gravity of the original. James Mason is serious as the one conscientious Cuban minister. Victor Spinetti, as a father trying to get his children ashore, plays reticently and well. Max von Sydow, no surprise, is fine as Schroeder. Luther Adler, big surprise, is restrained and moving as a

(continued on page 32)

Films Worth Seeing

The Last Tycoon. Fitzgerald's fragment fractured further. Still, some atmosphere—and Robert De Niro's strong-dreamy performance.

The Marquise of O . . . Eric Rohmer's exquisite film "placement" of Kleist's novella, in Kleist's language. A gem.

Network. TV power plays. Paddy Chayefsky's script is basically phony, but it crackles along. Cast and direction are slick.

The Seven-per-cent Solution. Sherlock Holmes meets Sigmund Freud—and high time, too, for both of them. A wonderfully acted romp.

SK

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The Poems of Allen Grossman

This is our sixth of a number of presentations of poets and essays on poets. Allen Grossman's first book was A Harlot's Hire, *published by Walker-de Berry, Inc. in 1961, his second* The Recluse, *published by the Pym Randall Press in 1965. All of the poems here are taken with his permission from* And the Dew Lay All Night upon my Branch, *a selection privately printed by the author at Brandeis University,* © *Allen Grossman, 1974.*

Lilith

I was the first made women. I first wept
Alone in the changed light of evening in a chamber
For love.
I am in the trees when the wind visits them
With altering voices
As the year clothes and unclothes.
*Non est Bonum. . .*it is not good
To be alone.

I rose with the maples on the evening of the first day
Flaming.
Of all birds I loved the Tanager for his scarlet.
I would have filled all the spaces of his song,
Enfolded him as the orange flame enfolds
The blue of its own cooling heart.
I cannot say what I could not have been:
The plenitude
Meted to his emptiness
The heat of which he dreams in the cold night
And the light
All lost.

Oh Tanager, first and last you are a slave to shadows.

Each tree sings,
The leafed tree with the fullest sound.
I am Lilith, the unmarried,
Whom three strong angels could not haul
Back to Eden.
Let Adam howl like a whipped child
The loss was my loss.
I kneel upon the bank, and take my hair down
Weeping like a woman.
Let exiles and altarless men worship me
As night without stars.
I spread my hair over them.

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The Pilgrim

And did the swan sing "Kristallnacht"
Sitting upon his freezing lake?
Oh yes, I heard him as I passed
And blessed him for his song's sweet sake.

And as I passed I lifted up
I lifted up my heart and eyes
As someone wandering with a cup
Feels the fountain rise.

And are those echoes ringing still?
And are these circles echoes of that song?
As one stone sleeps beneath the mill
The other grinds the corn.

And as I passed I saw the names
Like burning babes upon the air
And worshipped them, a pilgrim cold,
And called them everything that's fair.

O Muse, the ox has set his foot
Upon the flower and the root;
The ox that turns the mill has trod
Down the vestiges of God.

The Unfinished Man

The fleeing forests of the mystic winter
Cast shadows on my children at their play.
This April is as cold as summer's end;
It is like a young man's mind or like a girl's
Wasting passion on the thought of death.
I had hoped for greater certitude than this
Hard sentence written in the spring:
The kabbalist is not a married man
Nor is he rabbi who has forked himself
In children. The God of the created world
Is April's hostage as am I. Therefore,
Let us begin our meditation on
This evil and uncertain weather.

Like birds out of a solitary Oak
My children rose who now in April's evening
With sweet unsettled cries return to rest.
We are shards of one majestic being
Which dreams of its own beauty in the spring
As of its own recurrent shapes the sea
Is never satisfied. Love shattered us
And shook us into such separate being
As now the spring discloses by its cold
Wandering here as once God on an evening
Searched for his own image in the garden.
Regard this Oak, late flowering and latest
To lay down its leaves, God's tree, despising change.

Great angel of my birth, and you, father,
Beast of my begetting, leave me now.
My grief demands a solemn loneliness—
Allow me in my thirtieth year to claim freedom,
An unfinished man haunted by phantoms of the threshold.
There is no time, being no longer young,
For more thoughts than one;
I shall hereafter have one thought alone:
I shall bind it in mysterious ways upon my forehead
And shall contrive to have it always
Before my eyes. The sign of it
Will be upon the door-post of my house
And beyond that blazoned in the mansions of my sleep:

The world is stern, unfigured, without description,
Containing no mystery or treasure.
In it labour is lost, and love
Cast out like wings upon the water without resting pl.
My plow prepares the winds, and my great horses
Labour in the empty fields where no tree
Shades the turning. The seed falls,
And falls, through sight and thought and dream
And darkness more profound than dream,
And falling is its fate and fertile rising,
Blossom and decay, harvest and hoarding.
This heart, this plow, and this my ponderous team
Prepare the desert of the world without repose.

There is that in me which will make time
Remember my incompetence
And how it was that to these ends and images
I offered up desire, and did persist
In thought and wore the darkest garment in this
And other seasons, and did not greet the spring
With condescension to occasional reality;
But rather did prolong the meditation
Of one thought
Till in my purity I had become
Perfectly accompanied or perfectly alone—
This is the sacrament of resolution
Which has formed part of my profoundest dreams.

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The Recluse

I.

My life is bountiful, although I dwell
Absurdly in it. I am a bird disgracing
This most lovely tree by my poor plumage,
Half grown and badly worn as if unowned.
About me grow such gorgeous blossoms
I have long since called them eyes of God.
On this white tree amid blue flowers of air
I am the only thing improbable.
To my own senses I am all unreal.
This bright world lacing and unlacing
Cannot create me in another sense
But stares out of its luminous blue eyes
Unwondering at my wind-eaten wings.

II.

I live beside a stream that does not flow,
And I have grown as still as my profound
And household river. I am as cold as ice
And do not know how light inhabits me
Making my heart a crystal cave, untenanted
By anything but glory. I do well know
That underneath, the sea searches the stream
And claims it, beyond all power to contain
Its meanings, or withhold its tearless well
From ocean's fields made barren by the rock
The name of which is Niobe-of-tears.
And by this sign I know that I shall love
Again, and thereby grow both swift and dark.

III.

My house is older than my life and therefore
A continual instruction. Through it
Pours the song of birds as if it were
Not there. I read in Ovid at my table
How men were changed from being men
To something less deceivable, and I
Am changed by solitude until the light
Lives through me and my body is no more
A breeder of shadow. On darker days
The rain inhabits me, dim without sorrow
And chill without love. From my reverie
Woodpeckers wake me with their stony bills
Searching in the rotten walls for food.

IV.

In especial I am haunted by Apollo
Who loved Daphne, Daphne who became
A tree. I follow her across the fields
Crying, "I am the god of wisdom offering
Knowledge of the past, and of the present
And of what from the dark source beyond us
Is yet to flow." And I too see her run,
With the dark certitude of a natural thing
Knowing this is not love, whatever
Love may be, that at her back cries out,
"I am a god." Her father was a river
In the vale of Tempe, who changed her
Into laurel which is forever green.

V.

Something has nested in the chimney
And makes a phantom fire with the roaring
Of its wings, stirring the ashes on the stone
In the act of comforting. I warm myself
At night beside this fire, and listen to
The song in the nest that floats above me like
The sea that lives and does not live in shells.
And who will tell me that I do not pray
(Being unfashionable) with the profoundest right
Of a deserted man to that vague thing
Which has usurped my empty hearth and altar
And is a common bird, and yet unknown
To me except by cries, and by the breath of wings?

VI.

Wild iris, the hidden violet, and clover
And a dozen jewels nameless to me
Rise in the rank pasture by the river.
What is more real? And these too evening
Encompasses, and night devours altogether.
Fireflies remember the nightly death
Of flowers, luring the wanderer by the river
Tranced in the fire of memory and the dew
To consecrate himself to quest for those
Ten thousand grails. I am not the knight
Of flowers. I am the beast rather
Seen by Gahereth drinking of the river
From whose belly issued the cry of dogs.

VII.

Much has been said in dispraise of memory
And I deny it all. I shall not live
In this place long—the meditation
On the signs and sacred images of desire
Must have an end. This place I shall revisit
On the shrunken stream in autumn, coming up
The current in an old tin boat to where
My house untenanted is hid by fainting blooms
Suffered by summer to grow much too long.
And I will greet the god of the place
With temperate rejoicing and call him by the name
I knew when last I loved—and for the dance
The hamadryads will forsake their trees.

VIII.

What is this wind which twists all,
Letting nothing be final or blooming,
But all, at once, rooted and wandering?
Is this the hour and the minute of the end,
When the gigantic oak goes straying on the land
And streams withdraw to caverns underground?
Far inland I behold the driven gull
Afloat upon the frothing crests of trees
As on the uninhabitable sea;
And I am paralyzed with loneliness
And cannot think except to cry aloud
Holds the wide world any slim and glittering thing
For which my heart's need has not a use and gratefulness.

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Spring Song

When the domestic animal becomes *sauvage*
Gives up its cushion and adopts a bed
Of rotted leaves behind the shed, when the cat
Strays and the garish bird loses its way in the garden
Leaving the mistress of the house with dreams
And all things go the way they came and are
Busy about their own undoing,

Something enters the garden I do not know
And gives no evidence that it is there
Unless it be the somewhat visionary way
The eye despite the shadows apprehends
The ghostly limit of the familiar
And does not stop where the path has always ended
But lingers beyond that someway on;

Then begins the song of the chickadee
Sucking and blowing on its instrument
Like someone singing with a deep intent
To something standing very much apart
Not caring if whatever hears is kind
Undoing all the purposes of mind
Making the garden larger than before.

The Turning Tree

(to J.)

This to be beautiful to you
Set against all this you know of
So ominous, set against it,
Overcome, might overcome.
This to be beautiful, beautiful,
Never alone enough with God
Never enough among fountains
This be beautiful Spring blue

Leaf love you for this the while
I am with you and the while after
This earth I am standing on, the
Herons and smaller birds possess.

This to be beautiful to you
The downward fire I spoke of
The eel grass, the snowy path,
The wide shore, the wide shore.

Speak of it, speak it, unceasing, all
These lines to the tomb, O turning tree,
Set against all this you know of
Overcome, will, overcome.

Grave tree of the dark plowland under,
I will will the whole time to you:
Falling water, wave falling, dew
Dust, horses, spirits, Spirit.

The Poetry of Allen Grossman

Allen Grossman seems to me among the best, and the least known, of the middle generation of American poets: the generation of Ashbery and Merwin and James Wright. He is almost nowhere to be found in the anthologies, an honorable exception being John Hollander's *Poems of Our Moment*. Yet he has three books; his first and most generous volume (*A Harlot's Hire*, 1961; now out of print) was by any reckoning very accomplished; his neglect, compared with the thriving fortunes of talents far more slender, looks like an unlucky accident of fashion. At a time when the public taste is shifting away from confessional verse and other journalistic modes, a poet such as Grossman might be expected to command a steady audience. For he is a modernist and a Romantic. He lets it be known, now and then on a strident note, everywhere in his poetry, and what he means by it seems to be this: "The origin of poetic authority is always, I venture to say, the Wisdom tradition, which is not religion or thought but the sense of the self in the highest mode imaginable." The sentence is from Grossman's study of *The Wind among the Reeds (Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats*, 1969). And it has the austerity of moral purpose that one associates with Wordsworth's great Preface. That Grossman is indeed one of those who, in speaking truly for themselves, speak for others as well, the selection printed here will show.

You find him at his own highest reach in "The Recluse" and "The Unfinished Man." The author of "The Recluse," who is the hermit, who is the representative poet or scholar of nature and nature's signs, learns of hivself by living apart from the world. He is gravely and, at times, comically out of touch.

On this white tree amid blue flowers of air
I am the only thing improbable.

And, having fled the chaos of ordinary life, he lacks the toughness of that which he has renounced, and the grandeur of that which he would accept. The created glory of nature cannot be compassed in song: it will not suffer the embrace. He makes his song therefore of humility.

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This bright world lacing and unlacing
Cannot create me in another sense
But stares out of its luminous blue eyes
Unwondering at my wind-eaten wings.

Thus he admits the reign not only of nature but of man-made things.

My house is older than my life and therefore
A continual instruction.

And he contrasts his own solitude with the superb animation of figures in the greater mythologies: he thinks of Daphne.

And I too see her run
With the dark certitude of a natural thing
Knowing this is not love, whatever
Love may be, that at her back cries out,
"I am a god."

The poem turns on a small and wholly unmystical change in the nature he beholds—something mysterious nesting in the chimney, fireflies haunting the night air—at any rate these are the poet's examples: they might be anything. They make the hermit's dwelling with himself suffice, and his hymn to memory—the powerful cadence that begins "Much has been said in dispraise of memory/ And I deny it all"—comes to rest in a curiously modest version of solipsism.

Far inland I behold the driven gull
Afloat upon the frothing crests of trees
As on the uninhabitable sea;
And I am paralyzed with loneliness
And cannot think except to cry aloud
Holds the wide world any slim and glittering thing
For which my heart's need has not a use and gratefulness.

"Authority" belongs to the poet who, having tried to learn all, knows that he has found only the limits of his self-knowledge. They are *his* all. I count "The Recluse" among the most perfect lyrics in American poetry of the last two decades.

"The Unfinished Man" has a similar theme. The bad weather of early spring galvanizes the speaker of this poem into a nervous kind of song, and the weather's uncertainty makes him keenly aware that his life, in several aspects, is now balked in mid-passage. He is caught in a cycle of obligations, not properly isolate, and unable to find in love's company the desired emblems of permanence. God, as in most of Grossman's poems, is elsewhere and not to be bothered—though, as master of nature, He too must be "April's hostage." The cry for a tentative freedom is what brings the unfinished man a temporary prospect beyond the weather.

The world is stern, unfigured, without description,
Containing no mystery or treasure.
In it labour is lost, and love
Cast out like wings upon the water without resting place.
My plow prepares the winds, and my great horses
Labour in the empty fields where no tree
Shades the turning.

More visionary than the hermit of "The Recluse," the unfinished man is less clearly observant, and he strives not for a place of contemplation but for a final asceticism or a final union with things. He would be remembered as the man who pursued meditation

Till in my purity I had become
Perfectly accompanied or perfectly alone.

Grossman's poetry is addressed to the reader who can imagine how these two

states might become one: this is his "one story and one story only."

Yet his work is remarkably varied. He writes the domestic or professorial complaint (as in "The Cry," where a wife's sleepwalking brings the husband's reply to a well-known devotional poem: "something not understood"). And in "Signs," a poem explicitly prayer-like in its quest for God's presence, his God speaks in a voice no one would mistake for human.

"Who am so skillful with you, you do not know.
Lie down. You are not beautiful. But I am strong.
The known times did you no good at all.
The night is full of flares. The night is day.
Open your mouth. I love you. You do not know.
In a low sun the unsheltering great rains fall."

His most characteristic mode is perhaps the meditation on landscape. Touches in "Spring Song" are reminiscent of Frost—the eye that "does not stop where the path has always ended/ But lingers beyond that someway on." Grossman himself often stands out from the scene, off to one side, slightly bewildered. He can sound estranged in a way that is, if not peculiarly Jewish, at least peculiar and Jewish: so he reflects in "Amesbury," "What's Guinevere to the Jews? A myth./ Something they would not think for themselves," and wonders at the force of the light, "Making soft ridges in the ripening corn/ Which serve age after age to break the plow."

His style, always a marvel, has its sources. Frost is incidental. A more pervasive influence seems to be Lowell—especially in Grossman's early poems. "Depart./ The unpossessed live longest in the heart./ The rutted cobblestones of Troy will wreck/ The scythed and conquering chariots that deck/ The blackened street with roses"—I have chosen the lines not quite at random, but they are unexceptionable Lowell of, say, the "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid" or "Beyond the Alps" phase. Still, this does not last long. "The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;/ I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart"—*that*, surely, is Grossman's mature idiom. It is from Yeats' "The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart." Grossman is enthralled to all that is vatic in this key, and it is here that he astonishes. In "The Pilgrims" his energy at simple utterance is unearthly. And it would be useless to say that the energy makes the poem, since this is a prophetic lament, and the energy is the poem.

As one stone sleeps beneath the mill
The other grinds the corn.

For oracular confidence of this order one must go back to Blake, or to the Emerson of "Bacchus": "And the poor grass shall

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plot and plan/ What it will do when it is man." Grossman rarely succumbs to the great temptation of the oracular tone, which is hysteria: in this respect he may be favorably compared with Ginsberg. He calls "Pain," in a lovely but flawed poem, a gift of "unforgetting."

It is
The faithful one,
The testament, the witness,
As of the leaves
There is no summary. Only
The autumn tipping them
One after one
Into the well of the wind.

Grossman's poems are all, in some way, painful acts of unforgetting, though their effect is never to irritate but to calm: as he astonishes he refreshes. And that after all is another way of naming the sublime in poetry.

"Lilith" and "Tales of Odysseus" are the major accomplishments of Grossman in the high style. Both have to be read as dramatic monologues: the trouble is that in the first the speech has been cut loose from the drama, and, what is more dismaying, in the second the speaker cannot be surely identified as either Odysseus or the poet. They are strong poems nevertheless. Let one line—

Oh Tanager, first and last you are a slave to shadows

—serve as a touchstone of the poise and the eloquence they share. In contrast, Grossman's most recent poems can seem sheer oddities: the least that can be said for them is that they are too odd to be thought mannered. But, in judging his experiments, one must remember what an isolated figure he is. From this circumstance he has gained more than he has lost.

What Grossman lacks, outside his best work, is a certain sense of compositional order: the sense that tells you what should go where, which things to leave out, when to stop. He is among the few poets who seem to possess both the critical and the poetic faculty, but, in him, the two seem fairly discreet from each other. A poem with the refrain, *Rockefeller and Kublai Khan are moving the trees around,* is genuinely wild and unexpected. The benediction "As for the Towers," where the title is repeated endlessly to make a hypnotic incantation, cannot mean for most readers what it meant to the poet. Doubtless poetry aspires to a condition of pure incantation when it grows unhappy with itself as poetry. And yet this poet's many inventions have yielded him a singular triumph. He wrote a villanelle that ended "When I shall die, go up into the tower./ There will be sunlight like a downward fire," and from the memory of this earlier poem came "The Turning Tree." It is a chant that wards off the poison of change by celebrating it; most of all it speaks of the final change that is death.

Speak of it, speak it, unceasing, all
These lines to the tomb, O turning tree,
Set against all this you know of
Overcome, will, overcome.

Is there a reader would not take this for his epitaph?

David Bromwich

David Bromwich is a poet and critic and a graduate student at Yale.

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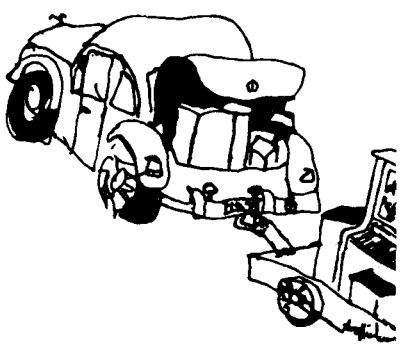

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Books Considered

Selected Poems by Robert Creeley

(Scribners; $7.95, $3.95 paperback)

From the very first, with the publication of *For Love: Poems 1950-1960,* Robert Creeley declared himself an experimenter: his interest has not been primarily in either ideas or in things, but in allowing what is *there* to be expressed in words, in sounds and rhythms that communicate states of mind that are not quite emotions, and not quite concepts. For Creeley, rhythmic modality is the very essence of poetry; he has never been interested in subordinating his art to statements of a social or political nature, nor has he been interested in developing form *per se.* He follows William Carlos Williams: "The poet thinks with his poem. In that lies his thought, and that in itself is the profundity." Had Creeley not gone on to become a quite substantial poet he would have achieved a sort of minor celebrity in poetry circles by having stated a truth there to be expressed, so far as contemporary poets are concerned: "Form is never more than an extension of content."

The *Selected Poems* is a surprisingly slender book, omitting much good material; apart from a superb longer poem "For My Mother: Genevieve Jules Creeley, April 8, 1887—October 7, 1972" which was not previously published, it consists of very few recent poems, most of them enigmatic indeed; one might even say bewildering—

CHANGE
for Ted

Turning
one wants it all—
no
defenses.

or perverse:

SURGEONS

One imagines a surgeon to be.
The hands move so slowly,
the attention is so steady.

Then one imagines a change,
as if a truck were to leave the

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highway
and drive up a country road.

Men pick apples for money
in the fall. Surgeons are babies
that grow on trees.

Unlike certain of his distinguished contemporaries—Adrienne Rich, Denise Levertov and Philip Levine come immediately to mind—Robert Creeley has not developed in any obvious way since the publication of his early books. The distinctive Creeley touch, or tone, the curiously unwilling willfulness, was there from the start, nearly always compelling:

I KNOW A MAN

As I sd to my
friend, because I am
always talking—John, I

sd, which was not his
name, the darkness sur-
rounds us, what

can we do against
it, or else, shall we &
why not, buy a goddamn big car,

drive, he sd, for
christ's sake, look
out where yr going.

He has been called a Minimalist, and while the term is ambiguous enough it can perhaps be justified, if by Minimalist we mean an artist who rather ascetically eliminates a great deal from his imagined landscape in order to focus upon the essential (which must always be a state of mind, a *response*, rather than an attempt to present the stimulus). The poems as we have them sometimes seem the after-effects of poetic moments, emotion not recollected—or reconstructed—but transformed into its equivalent in terms of consciousness. The event, the experience, is completed; the emotion has run its course; what remains is the description of the emotion's passage, for whatever it is worth. And by its very nature it must always seem rather diminished:

Is there some odor
which is anger,

a face
which is rage.

I think I think
but find myself in it.

The pattern
is only resemblance.

("Anger")

Admittedly there are dangers in so laconic and spare an art, for if one does not grant Creeley the premises of his poetry, if one objects to the stumbling, stuttering, ostensibly accidental nature of the finished product, it cannot be argued that there are peripheral matters of closely observed detail, rich and provocative language, wit, or wisdom, or even venom, to compensate for the deliberate modesty of revelation. Yet Creeley has stated that he doesn't want to write "what is only an idea, particularly my own"; if the world can't be evoked, "flooding all the terms of my thought and experience, then it's not enough, either for me or, equally, for anyone else." The difficulty with Creeley's poetry, particularly with assessing it, is that the *idea* of the poem often seems somewhat more interesting than the poem itself. Creeley's prose explanations of his work, his charming and altogether convincing interviews (see *Contexts of Poetry: Interviews 1961-1971*, Four Seasons Foundation, Bolinas, Calif.), appear to be arguing for an art that differs from his own; he is respectful of Pound's "Only emotion endures" and the emphasis Pound placed upon the quality of emotion rendered, yet his poetry insists upon an almost ritual, skeletal barrenness that excludes not only emotion but the reader's ability to imagine a human context at all. Which is, of course, perfectly admissable, for why *must* art be limited to human possibilities?

THE BOX

Three sides,
four
windows. Four

doors, three
hands.

Selected Poems consists of work from *For Love, The Charm, Pieces, A Day Book*, and *Words*, as well as 16 more recent poems. *A Day Book* contains a kind of poetic journal, a record of Creeley's experiences in London and elsewhere, addressed at times to certain friends (Bly, Jim Dine, Marisol), at other times meant to be a dialogue with himself, an unsystematic collection of brief notes. ("Wish I were home at this precise moment—the sun coming in those windows. The sounds of the house, birds too." And again: "Wish Joan Baez was here/ singing "Tears of Rage" in my ear./ Wish I was Bob Dylan—/ he's got a subtle mind.")

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It was fashionable for a while in the '60s to refuse to revise, so that one retained the spontaneous flow of the mind, its blunders as well as its successes, but after the passage of even a brief space of time such experimentation appears to have been merely self-indulgent—as when Creeley wonders aloud how to spell "MacCluhan" (sic) or wishes that a book on Tolstoi were reprinted when in fact it has been in paperback for some years (as he later notes, parenthetically). Such formless, directionless work undercuts the effect of the more disciplined poetry that surrounds it. Too often the reader is an unwilling and unimpressed witness to the poet's interior life, and to his insistence upon his own *ordinariness*. Since Williams, the elevation of the presumably trivial into art has become fairly commonplace, and there is the danger that a once-revolutionary concept can become, in a generation or less, another poetic convention.

But *A Day Book* is not representative of Creeley's art at its best. For that we must go to such powerful, succinct poems as "The Innocence," "Wait For Me," "The Door," "The Rhythm," and "Kore"; and to the long, groping, painful elegy "For My Mother," which is unfortunately too lengthy to quote in full. It concerns itself with the "tender, semi-articulate flickers" that constitute a human life, contemplated now by the living, the surviving. It concludes:

. . . "Death's

let you out—"
comes true,
this, that,

endlessly circular
life, and we
came back

to see you one
last
time, this

time? Your head
shuddered,
it seemed, your

eyes wanted,
I thought,
to see

who it was.
I am here,
and will follow.

At such times Creeley is absolutely mesmerizing in his ability to suspend and to define the passage of thought, the process of experience in all its ironic, inexorable sadness. No poetic theories are required to support such art: it achieves its own permanence by relating at once to our own groping, semi-articulate wonder.

Joyce Carol Oates

Joyce Carol Oates' most recent book is a novel, *Childwold* (Vanguard).

The Challenge of the American Revolution by Edmund S. Morgan

(Norton; $10.95)

America's Revolutionary Heritage: Marxist Essays by George Novack

(Pathfinder Press; $15)

There is something distinctly odd—and perhaps instructive—about viewing our 200th birthday from the vantage point of Southern California. This idea struck home in August when a visiting Japanese academic expressed surprise at the obvious indifference towards the Bicentennial being shown in Los Angeles and state, no doubt accurately, that there was considerably more hoopla going on in Tokyo. Certainly a few outposts of Eastern culture like the Huntington Library in San Marino have done their best to trot forth Revolutionary documents and memorabilia. But more typical of the region was the Fourth of July special in which a chain of pornographic movie houses offered a patriotic admission price of 76 cents.

Such reflections are prompted by the ideas of Edmund S. Morgan in *The Challenge of the American Revolution* and George Novack in *America's Revolutionary Heritage*. They arise from wondering just what that challenge might be, or just what that heritage might mean to Americans on this edge of the continent, where history is not so much despised as ignored by a society eager to embrace ever newer fads. Both Morgan and Novack clearly believe the Revolution to be perenially important. Yet if Southern California is—as many suspect and/or fear—a portent of the future, this underlying assumption is clearly open to question.

Of course "relevance" is no necessary test for history, but in these works it is either evoked or invoked by the authors. Both have produced collections of essays that deal with struggle in our past, and both to some extent show an interest in social and political change that furthers the tradition they seek to describe. This is the beginning and end of the similarities between them. In levels of scholarship, ideological stance, style and contribution to historical understanding, the works are as different as night and day.

Morgan is a sensitive, judicious and wide-ranging historian whose books—more than ten—have cast a sharp light on many facets of 17th and 18th century America. He is a good guide to historical questions, one who fairly presents the arguments of previous historical schools before combatting them with his own evidence and conclusions. In this volume one sees the Revolution from two different perspectives. First there is much about its background—colonial debates over parliamentary power, the change from theological to political thinking in the quarter century before 1776, the force of the Puritan ethic in shaping policies, the unresolved paradox that demands for freedom were supported by an economy of slave labor. Then Morgan provides insight into shifting historical interpretations of the Revolution's origins and nature, including the continuing academic argument over whether it really was a Revolution or only a War of Independence.

For the most part these essays are trial runs whose insights were later incorporated into Morgan's full-length works. Six of the seven were exhumed from scholarly journals stretching over the last 30 years. Having them available in one place is useful, but time has not been equally kind to all of them. Some of the arguments are more than a mite esoteric—does anyone but a professional historian really care that it was the British rather than the colonials who first made the distinction between "internal" and "external" taxes at the time of the Townshend Acts? Other theses seem overstated—can one really lay America's industrial development, even indirectly, at the foot of the Puritan ethic?

Such comments are mostly quibbles. Even when he exceeds the boundaries of one's interests or is less than wholly convincing, Morgan is a pleasure to

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read. The same cannot be said for Novack, a Marxist of the most primitive kind. For all his claims to be objective and "scientific" (capitalism "has made immense contributions to human advancement and brought many benefits to the American people"), he seems at heart a moralist ("the irremediable rottenness of capitalist imperialism and the intransigence of the ruthless plutocrats who control this country. . . ."). What's more, the baldly-stated framework of all his analysis—"Humanity has ascended by successive steps from savagery through barbarism to civilization"—appears touchingly quaint; at the very least, it lacks a meaningful definition of "civilization."

Perhaps the most dismaying aspect of the book is its patent attempt to capitalize on the Bicentennial. Indeed, its appearance can only serve to weaken one's faith in the purity (financial, at least) of the left. The work was published in 1966 as *Marxist Essays in American History*. Unlike the new title, the original one was honest—the essays are concerned with general US development, with what really should be called our *anti-revolutionary tradition*. Most appeared in the *International Socialist Review* and for those with a taste of overtly polemical history, they can provide an antidote to some of the patriotism masking as history that has filled the media this year. Otherwise the reader can find much more thoroughly researched and detailed analyses from a similar viewpoint in the works of historians like William Appleman Williams, Staughton Lynd, Jesse Lemisch and others associated with New Left historiography.

Given their stances, it is not surprising that the two authors differ over the legacy of the Revolution. Novack naturally expects the "heritage" to be a further revolution that will usher in a Socialist society. For Morgan, the Revolution was basically a challenge to "the human imagination," for it made people think and act in ways that previously seemed impossible. He believes such a challenge still exists, "Not to restore the past, but to enliven the imagination, to look at the unwarranted assumptions of our own time and have the nerve to say once more, 'It aint necessarily so.' "

Implicit in these words is the idea that a fresh, unorthodox look at the US will lead to political action. But the real challenge would seem to be to turn current disillusionment with the social order into meaningful action. Large numbers of Americans already have accepted the wisdom of "It aint necessarily so" without pushing for social change. In California—just a shade ahead of Massachusetts, after all—it is easiest to retreat into realms of private pleasures and personal development, to purchase a dune buggy, seize upon a new form of awareness therapy or take up tantric yoga. Such actions are justified in the name of "freedom," but it is also possible to see them as self-indulgence, or even one of the modern "devious tyrannies" that Morgan mentions.

Certainly if the challenge of the Revolution is to be revived, it will be necessary for some leaders to make the American public see the intimate connection between private pleasures and social problems. Two hundred years ago the Founding Fathers did just that. Theirs was the skill of welding the personal to the social, of bridging the gap between subtle oppression and plausible alternatives with a vision that could move large numbers of people into action. Today we suffer from problems no less great, but instead of Jefferson, Adams or Madison, we have Carter and Ford. While we await leaders who can once more make politics meaningful to both our private and public concerns, those interested in history can read Morgan, admire how well the revolutionary generation met the challenge of their time and take hope that perhaps it can happen again.

Robert A. Rosenstone

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Reconsideration

Kathleen Raine's Poetry

Volumes from which poems are drawn:
The Collected Poems of Kathleen Raine
(London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956)

The Hollow Hill and Other Poems, 1960-1964
(London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965)

The Lost Country
(Dublin: The Dolmen Press/ London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971)

West View was still in Paradise; for with the spring the fields beyond our garden blossom, and I, Persephone in Ida gathering flowers, astray for hours of golden eternity in the meadows and along the hawthorn hedges white with may and festooned with wild roses, first the pink, then the fragrant white Burnet rose. The various scents to my young senses were more than delight, they were indescribable harmonies of knowledge and meaning.

Kathleen Raine ("Persephone in Ida" in this passage from *Farewell Happy Fields*, the first volume of her autobiography) has never been a very fashionable poet. In England, her poetry is known, certainly, and honored with an occasional award, but it is largely neglected by those who create trends and fashions; in this country, though her scholarly writing (her splendid work on Blake for example) is generally admired, her poetry remains very little known. Yet, Kathleen Raine obviously believes, and rightly, that it is her poetry that defines and justifies her being—she is possessed by the *daimon* of poetry, not any other; and, unacknowledged though it be, she has written half-a-dozen lyric poems as beautiful as any produced in our time. But that very fact is no doubt the explanation for the unfashionableness of her poetry: as a critical term, beauty is more of an anachronism than anything else and a simple embarrassment to us as readers devoted to "modernity." Beauty does not move us, it makes us even rather nervous, and so we look for something else—almost anything else—in the poetry we read. Flash, yes, and abrasiveness; violence is in also, and so are brutality and crassness of spirit because they are felt somehow to be relevant in "this vile age" (as Yeats called it). But beauty? What's beauty to us, or we to beauty—what's Persephone to us, or we to Persephone—that we should weep for her? The one is as dead, we

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believe, and as out-of-date as the other.

It is quite true, of course, that Kathleen Raine is not really up-to-date, and she refuses even to try to be modish. While she may in fact live just off the King's Road in London with its hysterical agitation and its shoddy "trendiness," in spirit and in her poetry she dwells somewhere near Beulah with such dusty ancients and celebrants of beauty as Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus—not to mention the even more unusual company of Heraclitus, Thrice-Greatest (and Thrice-Oddest) Hermes, Macrobius on Cicero, Swedenborg, and Thomas Taylor, the *Platonist*. Moreover, she insists that she *is* Persephone (at least she is Persephone when she is not Demeter, the Virgin Mary, or Aphrodite); in other words, she insists on imagining her life and all life to be the stuff of myth rather than statistical matter for sociology. She would live a life, and celebrate it in her poetry, that has been lived countless times before and that only in recent days has been scorned as outmoded by people with a frenzy for the new and different.

A central mythic role that Miss Raine has played, and played again, is the twofold one that we find at the beginning and the end of the fine poem, mysterious and beautiful, called "The Transit of the Gods."

> Strange that the self's continuum should outlast
> The Virgin, Aphrodite, and the Mourning Mother,
> All loves and griefs, successive deities
> That hold their kingdom in the human breast.
>
> Abandoned by the gods, woman with an aging body
> That half remembers the Annunciation
> The passion and the travail and the grief
> That wore the mask of my humanity,
>
> I marvel at the soul's indifference.
> For in her theatre the play is done,
> The tears are shed; the actors, the immortals
> In their ceaseless manifestation, elsewhere gone,
>
> And I who have been Virgin and Aphrodite,
> The mourning Isis and the queen of corn
> Wait for the last mummer, dread Persephone
> To dance my dust at last into the tomb.

The myth that I have in mind—the myth to which Kathleen Raine has turned so often and with such moving effect—is as ancient as any known (first recorded in the richest and loveliest of the Homeric Hymns, the "Hymn to Demeter," from the seventh century BC), but myths, of course, are timeless, and it is also, deny it though we may, as current and as vital now as it was 27 centuries ago. It is the tale of Kore (Persephone), seized as she was gathering flowers—"roses and crocuses and lovely violets, irises also and the hyacinth and narcissus"—and carried off to the land of the dead by Hades; of the grief of her mother Demeter ("the Mourning Mother," Earth-mother and "queen of corn") and her search over the whole world for her daughter; and of the eventual agreement that the daughter should spend three months of each year as Persephone, dread queen of the underworld, and the rest of the year in the upper world as Kore, the "slender-ankled maiden," daughter of "rich-haired Demeter."

Behind the Demeter-Kore myth is a vision of palingenesis—palingenesis, or rebirth, of nature (when Kore returns again, as she has infinitely many times, to our world, nature is reborn); and palingenesis in human life, the parent reborn in the child who is reborn in the mythic role of parent to be reborn yet again in the eternal child. Kathleen Raine's myth is the story of "Mother, daughter, daughter, mother," the myth of every woman in both roles, Demeter, Persephone, Persephone, Demeter. Behind those mythic outlines and vitalizing them at every point, there is the felt pressure of the poet's personal experience, the deep emotion of being mother and of being daughter, of being both at once (but not wife: she remains "Miss Raine" in spite of her two ill-advised marriages—she is no more Mrs. Madge than Persephone is Mrs. Hades). Hers is the dual role that alone insures the continuation of life. To the myth she brings her life, making that myth live once again, and, as it were in gratitude, the myth confers on her life a vastly amplified resonance, a sense of mystery and a sense of meaning.

The relationship of "Mother, daughter, daughter, mother" that Kathleen Raine sings and celebrates is, like beauty itself, not much honored these days (though more than enough sons write about becoming fathers), but that only makes her poetry the more special, the more poignant, and the more timeless.

> Beside the river Eden
> Some child has made her secret garden,
> . . .
> Patterned with meadow flowers,
> As once I did, and was.

And that child, she goes on to imagine, is not only herself but her mother also, for,

> All is one, I or another,
> She was I, she was my mother
> The same child for ever
> Building the same green bower by the same river.

One could invoke such terms as "the child archetype" and "archetype of the mother" of course, but the experience of a poem like "By the River Eden" is more delicate, more immediate, and more moving—simpler and purer also—than such terms could ever suggest. Archetypal interpretation is too heavy and too gross an instrument to bring to poetry as fine, as personal, and as real as this. Perpetual recurrence, continuous rebirth, endless succession of identity and being—these things Kathleen Raine translates into an idiom of personal experience and personal emotion which, however, are themselves in turn transformed into universal vision by the power of myth.

> She gave me childhood's flowers,
> Heather and wild thyme,
> Eyebright and tormentil,
> Lichen's mealy cup
> Dry on wind-scored stone. . . .
> ("Heirloom")

To whom does "she" refer, and to whom "me"? The question is asked in another poem ("Dream-Flowers"), where the same gift is given in a dream—"But to what daughter and by what mother,/By what Demeter to what Persephone given?"—but no answer is forthcoming, unless it be an answer to say that all daughters are Persephone, all mothers Demeter.

But if nature is perpetually reborn, and if beauty comes back with each return of Kore to our world—if Persephone is forever succeeding Demeter—then this means that there is no end to the death of nature, to the loss of beauty, and to the passing of Demeter. This is why Kathleen Raine's poetry—her hymn to beauty—is nearly always elegiac in mood. Her song is a song of pathos and poignance, of sorrow and lament; indeed, she seems almost to cultivate and to caress what Hopkins called "Sorrow's springs." It is the condition of beauty in

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this world, existing in time and as a natural fact, that it must be transient. Pathos is the shadow-self of beauty (as George Herbert says to his "sweet rose"—"Thy root is ever in its grave/And thou must die"), and the poignance of natural beauty, the feeling for the loss of all those flowers Kore was gathering when she was ravished by Hades, is shot through and through Miss Raine's poetry. "Kore in Hades" is perhaps the finest expression of this truth that time and beauty are both inevitably attended by pathos:

I came, yes, dear, dear
Mother for you I came, so I remember,
To lie in your warm
Bed, to watch the wonder flame:
Burning, golden gentle and bright the
light of the living.

Certainly the "dear, dear Mother" is Jessie Raine, whose legacy to her daughter has been twofold—the knowledge that all nature is alive (as in "Heirloom") and the gift of poetry itself ("the poet in me is my mother's daughter," she writes in *The Land Unknown*, the second volume of her autobiography). But if the "dear, dear Mother" is Jessie Raine, it is also, certainly, Demeter with her quickening gifts of fruit and grain and flowers:

With you I ran
To see the roadside green
Leaves and small cool bindweed
flowers. . . .
I listened
To the sweet bird whose song is for
ever,
I was the little girl of the one mother.

(This very tender love of daughter-mother has its opposite counterpart in the horror and revulsion at the rape that violates the primal relationship—*e.g.*, in "A Bad Dream":

I who fear neither death nor sorrow
fear the low,
To be dragged down
Where woman lies apathetic under
lust,
In unregarded acts perpetuating woe.

The feeling behind these lines is extremely powerful: the lust of Hades is felt as deeply as the love of the mourning mother—which explains why she never, as Miss Raine says, "relinquished the name my parents gave me.")

There is no way to go beyond the simplicity and purity of the language of

Some of the nicest kids you'd ever want to meet are in a constant state of semi-starvation. They subsist day in and day out on a few greens, some peas... and maybe a little corn pone or fat back once in awhile.

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"Kore in Hades": an eternal relationship, eternally renewed, is captured in language as simple, as precise, as ultimate, and as resonant as the relationship itself. But since that relationship is eternally renewed, so must it also be eternally lost.

World you wove me to please a child,
Yet its texture was thinner than light, fleeter
Than flame that burned while it seemed
Leaves and flowers and garden without end.
Bright those faces closed and were over.

"Kore in Hades" concludes, like "The Transit of the Gods," with a mysterious ritual played out in alliterations, assonances, half-rhymes, and ghostly echoes of sound—an imitation of beauty, a profound homage to it, and a poignant lament for its bright, quick brevity:

Here and now is over, the garden
Lost from time, its sun its moon
Mother, daughter, daughter, mother, never
Is now: there is nothing, nothing for ever.

Behind the best of Kathleen Raine's poems one feels something that I can only call the form or the Platonic idea of the individual poem. Yeats had the notion that the form of a poem exists before it is ever captured and quite outside the consciousness of the poet; Eliot said that his poems first came to him as wordless rhythms without content. And this is what I feel about Kathleen Raine's finest form or idea—a sort of underlying, speechless rhythm, a delicate harmony of sound and emotion—and one feels that ghostly presence exerting its pressures in every line and every phrase, as if all had come right and all were right, nothing lacking, nothing left over, the finished poem completely at one with its pre-existent model, a created beauty that, unlike natural beauty, will not—any more than the artifacts of Blake's Beulah or Yeats's Byzantium—change with time or be lost: "indescribable harmonies of knowledge and meaning."

James Olney

James Olney is professor of English at North Carolina Central University.

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Correspondence

Wrong to Die?

To the editors:

The American Civil Liberties Union, in opposing Gilmore's execution, applies with unimpared consistency its belief that the death penalty is impermissible and abhorrent.

In his article "The Right to Die" (*TNR*, December 11), Thomas Szasz claims that Gary Mark Gilmore has an enforceable contractual right to be executed by the State of Utah. Any such contract should be void for violation of fundamental public policy and unconscionability. Even Thomas Hobbes, that rationalizer of the totalitarian state, agrees that the requirement of obedience to the law ends when the state proposes to kill you.

If the rule of law dictates that the state protect the *liberty* of persons who obey the law, it demands as a logical and existential priority that the state protect their *lives*. Nor is the state absolved from protecting the liberties and lives of those who violate its laws. Szasz's assertion that there is a right to be punished for a crime avoids the only question before us in the Gilmore matter: whether the death penalty is a suitable punishment.

The ACLU's quarrel here is not with Gilmore or his desire to die, but rather with the State of Utah and its intent to gratify Gilmore's death wish. Gilmore does not propose to commit suicide; it is the state that proposes to kill him. We do not believe that the state ought to have that right or power. We share Szasz's revulsion from the obsencity of resuscitating Gilmore after his suicide attempt in order to preserve him for the executioners. This, like the spectacle of volunteer sharpshooters, of book and film deals, and the like, are the direct result of the availability of the death penalty.

Szasz quite misunderstands Plato's *Phaedo*. Socrates vigorously defended himself before the Athenian jury and believed himself innocent. If his biased jury were to convict him, he argued, his penalty should be a purely smybolic fine and a commendation for his services to the state. He differed with Crito only on the question of whether he might now really violate the laws of Athens and make his escape, rather than bow to the erroneous verdict and cruel sentence. Nothing in the *Phaedo* suggests that Socrates would not have taken an appeal to an appellate court, had there been one, to set the verdict and sentence aside. Socrates, like Gilmore, was not a suicide but a victim of judicially sanctioned homicide. Gilmore's contempt for human life—that of his victims, his own, that of other prisoners on death row—is quite distinguishable from Szasz's usual respect for life, even to the point of giving people the dignity of ending their own.

Henry Schwarzschild
Director, ACLU
Capital Punishment Project

Kauffmann, *from page 20*

dying old professor. And Wendy Hiller—everybody rise, please—is queenly: simple and beautiful, as Adler's loyal wife and dignified widow. The Adler-Hiller scenes hint at what this picture might have been.

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Lumière (New World). This is Jeanne Moreau's first film of her own: she wrote and directed it, and she plays one of the four principal roles. It's a sad mixture, of unique feeling, of corn and nearly-laughable "starriness."

In her directing Moreau shows what some other good actors have shown—Paul Newman, for instance. A lot of experience in the making of films can, for the right person, lead to considerable deftness in the directing of them. The script is another matter. It's a story of four actresses—four stories, really—in Paris today, four women of varying ages (one of them Italian) who are friends. The best thing about Moreau's script and direction is this very quality of friendship among women, some sense of communion, of unspoken shared knowledges.

But each of the stories is remarkable for its unremarkableness. One aspiring young actress (Caroline Cartier) is having the sort of jealousy trouble with her lover that is snipped out of 400 previous French flicks. Another more successful young actress (the lovely Francine Racette) goes through a romance with a visiting American that is embarrassing in its stagy sophistication. The Italian (Lucia Bosè) who is retired, now a wife and mother, repeats the certainly true but here unvitalized plaints of the worried aging wife.

And the role that Moreau has written for herself is like a Perelman parody of a star part. She's a glamorous successful actress who is about to receive a coveted award. She loves poetry. She's a crack pistol shot. She has a young lover from whom she is gently disengaging. She is engaging with a German writer (Bruno Ganz) who has adored her for years. She is the best friend of an elderly scientist (François Simon) who, committing suicide when he learns he has cancer, leaves only one note—for her. Except for the bad teeth and ravaged face she insists on displaying, Moreau gives us a traditional male cartoon of an adored woman in a film of alleged female truth.

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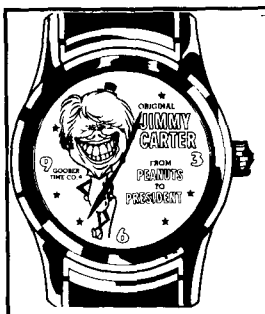

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